MASTER
NEGATIVE
NO. 92-80493-5

MICROFILMED 1992

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES/NEW YORK

as part of the
"Foundations of Western Civilization Preservation Project"

Funded by the
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

Reproductions may not be made without permission from
Columbia University Library

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

The copyright law of the United States -- Title 17, United States Code -- concerns the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material...

Columbia University Library reserves the right to refuse to accept a copy order if, in its judgement, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of the copyright law.

AUTHOR:

CAMPBELL, DOROTHY

TITLE:

INTRIGUING DUCHESS, MARIE DE ROHAN, DUCHESSE ...

PLACE:

NEW YORK

DATE:

1930

Master Negative #

92-80493-5

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
PRESERVATION DEPARTMENT

BIBLIOGRAPHIC MICROFORM TARGET

Original Material as Filmed - Existing Bibliographic Record

944.032
C4283

Campbell, *Mrs.* Dorothy de Brissac.

The intriguing duchess, Marie de Rohan, duchesse de Chevreuse, by Dorothy de Brissac Campbell. New York, Covici, Friede, 1930.

4 p. l., 392 p. front., pl., ports. 21½cm.

"A selected bibliography": p. [389]–392.

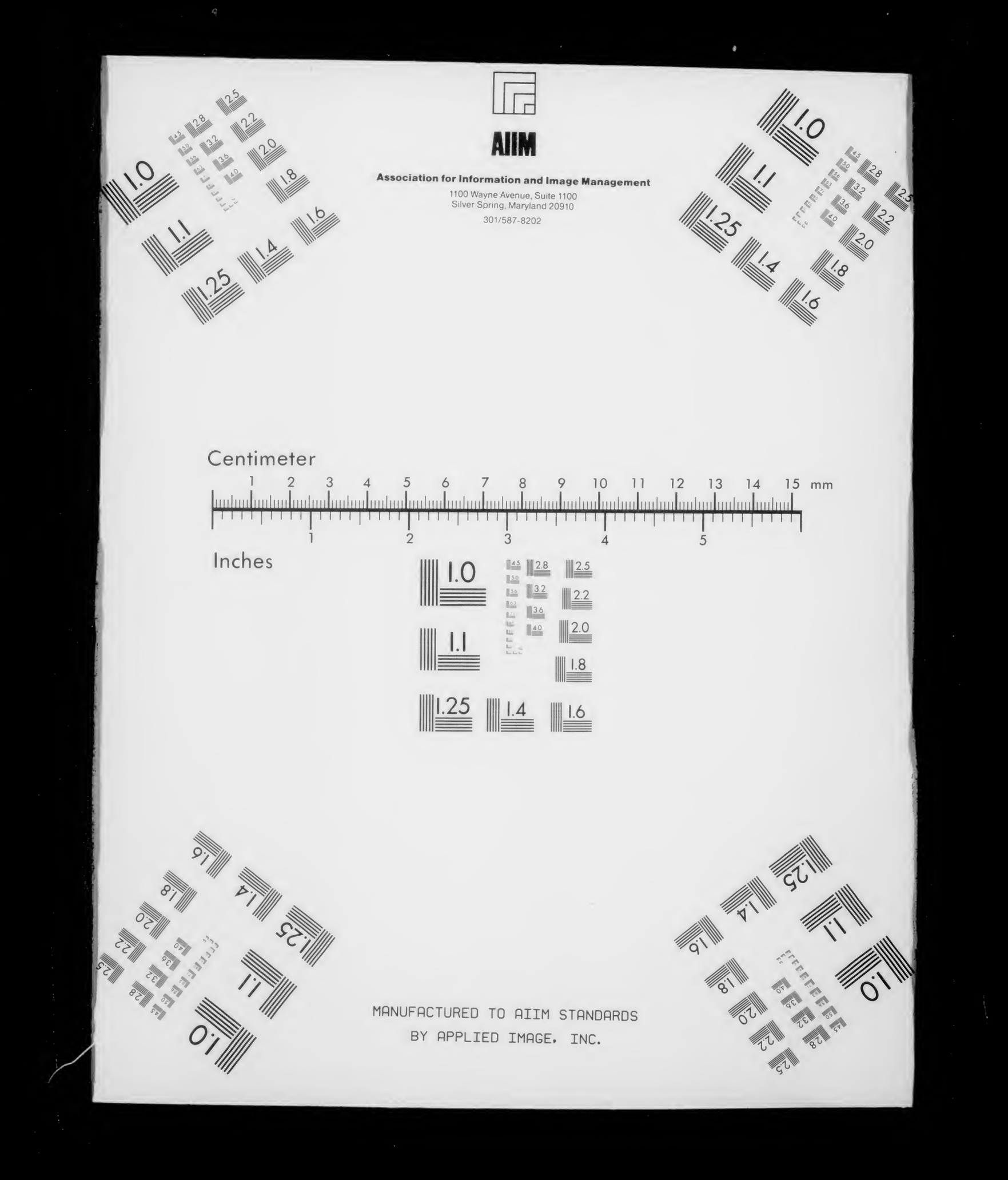
1. Chevreuse, Marie Aimée (de Rohan) duchesse de, 1600–1679. 2. France—Court and courtiers. I. Title.

30-30703
Library of Congress DC123.9.C4C3
Copy 2.
Copyright A 30426 [4] 920.7

Restrictions on Use:

TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35mm REDUCTION RATIO: 11X
IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIB
DATE FILMED: 3-6-92 INITIALS M.D.C.
FILMED BY: RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS, INC WOODBRIDGE, CT


AIIM
Association for Information and Image Management
1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1100
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
301/587-8202
Centimeter
Inches
MANUFACTURED TO AIIM STANDARDS
BY APPLIED IMAGE, INC.

Columbia University
in the City of New York

LIBRARY

GIVEN BY

Mrs. D.H. Robinson

Marie de Rohan, Duchess de Chevreuse

(After the painting by Moreelsi, once in the possession of Charles I)

THE INTRIGUING DUCHESS

MARIE DE ROHAN

Duchesse de Chevreuse

BY

DOROTHY DE BRISSAC CAMPBELL

NEW YORK
COVICI FRIEDE PUBLISHERS
1930

Copyright 1930 by Covici, Friede Inc.

Mrs. D. H. Thomson
Dec. 4, 1943

944.032
C4283

Typography by S. A. Jacobs
Printed in the United States of America
At the Stratford Press, Inc., New York

To
D. A. R. C.
who made it possible.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Marie de Rohan, Duchess de Chevreuse	*Frontispiece*
	PAGE
Marie de Rohan, Duchess de Chevreuse	26
The Duke of Buckingham	58
Marie de Medici	130
Cardinal Richelieu	196
Richelieu's Barge	252
Anne of Austria	282
Marie de Rohan, Duchess de Chevreuse	382

THE INTRIGUING DUCHESS

THE INTRIGUING DUCHESS

MARIE DE ROHAN

Duchesse de Chevreuse

LOVELY women dominated Seventeenth Century France. They enslaved kings by their beauty, hampered statesmen by their intrigues and destroyed the peace of Europe for an idle whim or a fleeting emotion. International treaties were casually arranged between kisses, and wars were lightly conceived between the perfumed sheets of beds not endowed with the blessing of the Church.

White hands pulled strings and entangled everything in an impalpable web of intrigue. Soft lips asked indiscreet questions. Rounded bodies blocked the sword of justice and lured men to conspiracy. It was a kaleidoscopic scene, shifting from boudoir to battlefield, from dungeon to throne-room. And through it, vivid and challenging, Goddess of Mischief and Queen of Hearts, moved Marie de Rohan, Duchess de Chevreuse.

Connected by blood or marriage with the noblest houses of France, Marie de Rohan stepped naturally into the lime-light. She held it by her intrinsic verve and charm. Not content with being one of the acknowledged beauties of her day, she was possessed of a political acumen that made her an influential figure at three European courts.

For twenty years her life was one long duel with the great Richelieu, and she did more than any one person to endanger the success of his policies. When he made ardent love to her, she coquetted with him; when he tried to imprison her, she rode across France disguised as a man and escaped him; when he played politics with her, she check-mated him. Three times she was exiled but always returned in triumph to carry on the struggle, and the death of the Cardinal left the issue still undecided.

Her great misfortune was the fact that she was a woman. The intrepid courage that met danger with a laugh of pure delight, the restless energy that made domesticity insupportable, the quick intelligence that made political intrigue a fascinating game were alike stifled by the accident of sex. They found their only outlet in the incessant intrigues that kept France in a turmoil and ruined Richelieu's peace of mind.

On the other hand, she turned her femininity to good account. Again and again the hapless pawns who were dazzled by her bewildering charm fell beneath the avenging hand of Richelieu, but others came joyfully to the sacrifice. From the wreckage of one scheme she turned to another and snatched victory from defeat.

For all her political activities, Marie de Rohan was free from personal ambition. She conspired against the State either in the interests of her friends or from pure love of the game. "Plotting," she explained naïvely, "stimulates the imagination and the dangers it entails impart a delightful zest to love." In that one sentence we have the key to her fascinating personality. A tireless enemy, a passionately loyal friend, witty and wicked, gallant and gay, there have been many worse women than Marie de Rohan, but few more interesting.

* * * * * * *

In September 1615 the town of Bayonne was *en fête*. The air was filled with flying petals, gay buntings decorated every house-front and banners flapped in the breeze that blew from the Pyrenees. In the narrow streets citizens in gala dress rubbed shoulders with steel-clad pikemen and courtiers in velvet and satin. Great nobles with their attendants rode through the throng and messengers scurried back and forth, swelling with importance. Outside the walls a city of tents had sprung up overnight and over the great pavilion in the meadow floated the oriflamme of France.

Across the river was another pavilion over which flew the banner of Spain. The two crowns had been united by a double wedding, and the little border town had been selected for the exchange of brides.

To Marie de Medici, Queen-Mother and Regent of France, this day was the culmination of five years of diplomacy. Her hero-husband, Henry of Navarre, had fought Spain all his life and was preparing for another campaign, when the dagger of a fanatic priest cut short his career. Seizing the reins of power in her own greedy hands, Marie de Medici had reversed his policy. She had set her heart on a Franco-Spanish alliance and had achieved it, in the face of every obstacle. Her

Huguenot subjects rebelled in protest but still she persevered. With an army to protect her from the rebels, she had come to Bayonne and carried through her project. Her young son, Louis XIII, had been married by proxy to Anne of Austria, daughter of the King of Spain. The Princess Elizabeth of France was given in exchange to Phillip, heir to the Spanish throne, which he later ascended as Phillip IV.

The Regent was intoxicated with triumph at the success of her diplomacy. The bridegroom did not share his redoubtable parent's excitement. He was a lethargic youth, not much given to displaying emotion. Gloomy dark eyes looked out from under an unruly thatch of bristly black hair. He had the large Bourbon nose and a mouth that habitually hung half open, giving his face a look of melancholy stupidity.

For five years Louis had been taught to regard the Spanish Infanta as his predestined bride. Her portrait hung in his rooms at the Louvre, and his ears had rung with praises of her beauty and charm. His response had been nil. By some curious chance this son of the amorous Henry of Navarre was sexually abnormal. No lovely face could make his heart beat faster or send the blood coursing madly through his veins. He was terrified of women, shrank from the very thought of physical contact and was to earn only too well his title of Louis the Chaste.

It was the irony of fate that such a man should have been linked in marriage with one of the most beautiful women in Europe. Although only fourteen at

the time of her marriage, Anne of Austria was already very lovely. She was tall and slender with a graceful figure and exquisite hands. Her complexion had a clear pallor that gave her face the appearance of a finely-cut cameo. Glowing dark eyes with curling lashes made an effective contrast with her masses of chestnut curls.

Anne had received a little note of welcome from her husband, graceful in diction, discreetly ardent in tone. It consoled her for the sullen indifference of his manner when they met during the ceremonies. Not till later did she realize that the note had been written by his enterprising and ingratiating friend, d'Albert. Louis himself regarded his approaching nuptials with distaste tinged with panic.

That night the little bride was duly escorted to the nuptial chamber and installed in the state bed. The sheets had been sprinkled with holy water, a Prince of the Church had blessed the royal couch and the Court waited to give the young couple their felicitations and good wishes. Only the bridegroom was missing. The slow minutes crawled by, eye-brows were raised and faint snickers were heard in the embarrassing stillness. Finally Marie de Medici, with a brow like thunder, left the room in search of the truant. She found him cowering in his own bed, whither he had fled for refuge.

"Come, my son," said the imperious dame, holding out her hand. "It's not enough to get married. You must now come to the bride who awaits you." Docilely Louis rose, put on his gown and slippers and was led to the bridal chamber. Unprotesting, he was

tucked into bed and received the formal salutations of the Court. The room was then cleared, leaving only the two elderly nurses, who remained, according to custom, to cool the fires of ardor with the counsels of moderation. One gathers that, on this occasion, their services were not required.

The following morning, with the simple candor that marks this era in French history, an official statement was issued to members of the diplomatic corps. It was to the effect that the King had acquitted himself nobly and "had expressed himself as being very satisfied with the perfection of his marriage." Some of the diplomats were apparently unconvinced by this naïve document. The envoy from Mantua began his dispatch with the significant phrase: "If we are to believe what we are told . . ." Four years were to pass before Louis found courage to approach his bride again.

Anne had brought with her from Spain several stately duennas, awe-inspiring in their starched coifs and flowing robes. On her arrival in France she was given a number of maids-of-honor, young girls chosen from the noblest families in the land. Among these was Marie de Rohan, who thus makes her first appearance on the stage of history. It is possible that she accompanied the Court to Bayonne but there is no evidence to that effect. She first appears in the records after the return of the bridal party to the Louvre.

For generations the great rambling palace on the banks of the Seine had been the residence of the kings of France. Its countless rooms and endless corridors

were filled with the accumulated treasures of centuries, grey with the dust of ages. Noble dames and courtly knights, kings and clerks and courtesans had played their parts and passed on into the unknown. The Louvre was soon to be abandoned but one more play was to be acted within its walls. It was the tragi-comedy of errors that was the life of Marie de Rohan. In the autumn of 1615, for the first time, the principal actors in the cast were assembled beneath one roof.

In the State apartments, mistress of all she surveyed, lived Marie de Medici. The boy-king was relegated to humbler quarters. He was a mere nonentity, kept in the background by his ambitious parent who shrank from the thought of resigning her power as Regent. Louis had always been rigidly excluded from taking any part in the government and was, in effect, told to run away and play. To make his play more interesting, he was given, as companion, a young Provençal who combined rare personal charm with an expert knowledge of falconry.

This was Charles Honoré d'Albert, who was officially Huntsman to the King. D'Albert shared the King's amusements by day and his bed by night, enjoyed his absolute confidence and was his inseparable companion.

In yet another suite, gloomy and shabbily furnished, the little Queen sat all day over her embroidery frame, sorting the silks with listless fingers. Her dream of reigning in France, admired by her subjects and adored by her husband, had had a rude awakening.

She found herself neglected by the phlegmatic weakling to whom she had been married and kept in the background by her domineering mother-in-law. Bored and homesick, Anne watched with a mixture of envy and disapproval the harmless antics of her young French attendants. They were usually grouped around Marie de Rohan and seemed to find her a source of inexhaustible amusement. Her blue eyes danced, her vivid roguish face was alight with laughter and her infectious chuckle at some drollery would break into the oppressive silence of the huge gloomy room.

Accustomed to the paralyzing formality of the Spanish Court, Anne and her duennas were shocked by the irrepressible liveliness of the young Rohan. They were still more aghast at her wit which, to be truthful, was somewhat full-flavored, even for that candid age. Until this first appearance at Court, the life of Marie de Rohan had been one long, hilarious escapade, and the stultifying gloom of the Louvre failed to quench her wild spirits. The girl who played impish pranks in the Queen's apartments grew, by a natural process of development, into the woman of whom Mazarin was to say bitterly, "There was no peace in France until she left it."

Perhaps heredity was to blame. Marie de Rohan came of a restless race. Before Cæsar's legions conquered Gaul there were kings in Brittany who ruled their turbulent subjects with an iron hand. From these kings descended the princely house of Rohan, whose proud motto is *"Roi ne puis, prince ne daigne, Rohan je suis."*

Born of this house, with centuries of unbroken lineage behind him, Hercule de Rohan, Duke de Montbazon, was worthy of his race and name. He was a handsome swaggering giant of a man who faced the world with head flung back and a "you-be-damned" air that proved irresistible to the opposite sex. The haughty head was not over-burdened with brains, and Hercule was credited with having "the morals of a horse-trooper," but he had a few shining virtues. He spoke the truth at any cost, feared neither man nor devil and was absolutely, unwaveringly loyal to his chosen cause.

As a young man he had followed Henry of Navarre, sharing his hardships and his mistresses with a beautiful impartiality. In the golden days that followed Henry's coronation, Montbazon reaped the reward of his faithfulness. He was appointed Lieutenant of the King in Normandy and Governor of Picardy. Like all the nobles, he performed his duties by proxy and remained at Court in attendance on the King. He was also in attendance on the King's mistress, the Countess de Moret, and there he found a rival in the person of Claude de Lorraine who was destined to be his son-in-law.

Hercule shared his royal friend's weakness for amorous diversion but he realized the importance of having legitimate heirs. In accordance with his duty as head of a noble house, he married Madeleine de Lenoncourt, a well-born heiress of fifteen, and installed her at his chateau at Couzieres, near Tours. Eight years later she died, but she had fulfilled her mission in life. She had presented her husband with a son to carry on the name,

and a daughter who might, by a suitable alliance, add prestige to the house of which she was a member.

The son was Prince Louis VII de Rohan, Prince de Guéméné. Hercule must have eyed with some perturbation the wizened scrap of humanity who bore his name. Stunted and extraordinarily ugly, Louis was so insignificant in appearance that a contemporary described him later as "looking like a professional tooth-puller."

Marie-Aimée, blue-eyed and winsome, was more to her father's taste. Even as a child she showed signs of the beauty that was to prove so devastating, and she was keenly intelligent. When Marie was two years old her mother died, leaving several lovers to mourn her untimely decease. Hercule had no time to devote to the care of two small children. The King needed him in Paris and he departed, leaving them to the tender mercies of a succession of governesses. The nominal head of the household was Hercule's mistress, Louise Roger, who was said to have been a notorious prostitute in Tours.

Left thus without proper supervision, the two children grew up wild and unfettered. They consistently defied any attempts to discipline them and followed the dictates of their own sweet wills. Marie adored her brother, who was desperately witty and had a curious charm of manner, in spite of his unattractive appearance. The two were inseparable and kept the countryside aghast by their mad escapades. Hunting, swimming, fencing, steeple-chasing, they risked their necks a dozen times a day with unquenchable zest.

Marie often wore her brother's clothes, mixed frequently with his companions and shared his diversions. She thus absorbed a masculine outlook on life and its amenities, but was daily becoming more and more distractingly feminine. We have many portraits of her, painted and verbal, and from them we get a vivid impression of an impish, adorable creature, created for the delectation and destruction of men.

She was rather small with the dainty trim lines of a racing yacht—delicate strong hands, tiny feet and slender limbs. Her hair was true gold, a mass of crisp curls. The straight nose with its quivering sensitive nostrils, the oval face and arched eyebrows showed her aristocratic lineage; the well-modelled mouth with its full scarlet lips betrayed her passionate, generous nature. But her eyes were her chief beauty and allure. Large, dark blue with absurdly long lashes, they were now dreaming, now alight with laughter. At one moment they had "a mysterious power of penetration"; at the next they were melting and languorous and drove the man who gazed into their violet depths temporarily mad.

Chalais and Chateauneuf, de Jars and de Thou, Holland and Buckingham, King Phillip of Spain and Duke Charles of Lorraine, Montresor, Montagu, Campion and even the great Richelieu himself—all were to fall under the spell of those lovely haunting eyes and cast prudence to the winds for a smile from those red lips.

A contemporary writer tells us that, even at an early age, she had "a fascinating gift of coquetry and an alarming lightness of behavior." Thrilling with

vivid life, she loved as naturally as a humming-bird, and with as little circumspection. When surrender to Richelieu would have bought her power and prestige, she rejected him but would gaily give herself to a humble guardsman who took her fancy. Rejected lovers remained devoted, discarded lovers became her lifelong friends.

For all her promiscuous amours, Marie de Rohan had about her a gallantry, a forthright candor, a breeziness that makes her seem more fitted for the open road than for the scented boudoir. She rode day and night until the men with her were exhausted and probably swore like the proverbial trooper in the process. When she was a matron of twenty-five, she gave birth to a daughter and swam the Thames within the space of a few weeks, to the horror of Puritan England. She scandalized the Papal Legate by telling the Queen ribald stories and kept the Court in an uproar by the practical jokes she played on the stately Richelieu.

To the circumstances of Marie's early life may be traced some of the less admirable traits of her character. The lack of discipline imbued her with a cheerful contempt for authority, and the influence of Louise Roger may well explain the "alarming lightness of behavior" deplored by her contemporary. On the other hand, association with her brother developed self-reliance and a gay indifference to danger. It gave her a shrewd knowledge of life outside the polite walls of the drawing-room and sharpened her already keen wit. From her father she learned two things: how to play chess and how to stand by her friends in the face of danger, disgrace and death.

It was not, perhaps, the ideal training for a maid-of-honor to the Queen. Nevertheless, Marie was well equipped, mentally, to analyze the personalities of the courtly world in which she found herself. In those early days at the Louvre she came in contact with the actors who were to play important parts in the future, and she could watch history in the making.

Dominating the Court was the Queen-Mother who inspired a blend of fear and distaste in all about her. Marie de Medici was a large woman, portly and heavy-footed. Her malicious, prominent blue eyes were sunk in fat cheeks, mottled with habitual overeating. Deep lines graven by temper and self-indulgence marred her face. The hair above her low forehead was greying, but the fantastic coiffure she affected showed that her vanity still survived.

Linked with the Queen-Mother was her paramour, the Florentine Concini. This swaggering adventurer had come to Court years before, with nothing but a handsome face and unlimited impudence to commend him. His swarthy beauty so impressed Marie de Medici that she married him to her waiting woman, Leonore Galigaï, in order to have an excuse for keeping him at Court. Even during the life-time of her husband she had succumbed to his charms. After Henry's murder Concini became King in all but name. He was raised to the peerage with the title of the Marquis d'Ancre and loaded with gifts. Marie de Rohan came to the Louvre to find him the most influential man in the kingdom and fabulously wealthy. While his wife occupied rooms high up under the

eaves, Concini was installed in a pavilion within the palace grounds. It was an arrangement combining accessibility with discretion.

Marie de Medici and her favorite ruled with a high hand and their policy had reduced the country to a state of chaos. The Huguenots were in revolt against the Spanish alliance. The nobles were in revolt against a government in which they saw no profit for themselves. With mounting rage they saw honors, titles, gifts showered on a low-born Italian adventurer while they were ignored. Concini's own ill-advised insolence added fuel to the fire. He ruffled about the Court, insulting everyone of consequence, and insisted on being treated with almost royal honors. He was so ready to resent fancied slights that a contemporary wrote, "If you but lay a hand on this mountain it smokes."

Marie de Medici, besotted by his manly beauty and plausible tongue, could refuse him nothing. Only on one occasion did he fail to get his own way and that was when he came into collision with Hercule de Rohan, Duke de Montbazon. Annoyed at being refused some honor that had been promised to the Duke by the late King, Concini brought suit against him on some trumped-up charge. The Queen-Mother, in a lucid moment, hesitated to antagonize Montbazon who was one of the few nobles on whose loyalty she could rely. On the advice of a young and promising member of her council, Armand Duplessis de Richelieu, she ordered Concini to drop the suit. His rage knew no bounds. "By God, Sir," he wrote

to Richelieu. "You use me badly. You influence the Queen to write to me to drop the suit against Monsieur de Montbazon for her sake. What do all the devils—what do you or the Queen think that I am going to do? Anger gnaws my very bones." Richelieu remained unimpressed. Montbazon kept his estates, and anger continued to gnaw.

The Queen-Mother's partiality for Concini and his own insolent stupidity had the inevitable result. Civil war broke out all over France like a forest fire and was as difficult to extinguish. Each noble raised his own district against the Regent, and the royal troops waged a desultory campaign, enlivened by frequent mutinies. Battles were fought which resolved themselves into a series of rear-guard actions, with both sides retreating rapidly. When the Queen found herself in an awkward situation, she extricated herself by buying off her opponents. The Huguenot rebellion dragged on, making confusion more confounded and France was rapidly heading towards financial and political ruin.

Meanwhile the fifteen-year-old King, deprived of any part in the government of the realm, hunted and hawked, trained magpies or harnessed dogs to toy cannons. He seemed happy in his harmless pursuits, and Marie de Medici congratulated herself on her shrewdness in selecting for him such an admirable companion as d'Albert. The Huntsman had been careful to ingratiate himself with the Queen-Mother and her favorite. As a reward for his services, he was made Governor of Amboise,

a sinecure which gave him a regular income and an established place at Court. He was also appointed Master of Horse.

In reality, d'Albert was playing a deep game of his own. With an eye to the day when the King's favor would make him the most influential man in the kingdom, he was consolidating his position and making himself indispensable to his young master.

While Louis spent his days pursuing the elusive stag in the forest of Senlis and his nights in talking to d'Albert, his bride was left to amuse herself as best she might. It was a poor best. Day after day Anne sat under the expressionless eyes of her duennas, bedewing her embroidery with tears of sheer boredom. Her exquisite hands were her chief preoccupation, and the most meticulous manicure takes but a few hours of an endless day. Anne's mind, while tenacious, was limited. She was dependent on others for amusement and turned more and more to the vivacious Marie de Rohan whose fertile brain was always conceiving some new jest. Gradually Anne's early disapproval melted in the sun of Marie's smile. The two girls became friends, then devoted companions.

From the very first, the forlorn little Queen had excited Marie's quick sympathy. To a person of her generous nature, sympathy is akin to love. Marie conceived for the demure Spaniard a romantic devotion, a selfless loyalty that was to be the ruling motive of her life. She threw herself heart and soul into the task of bringing smiles to the woe-begone face and happiness to one whom fate seemed to have treated shabbily. Anne's

friends became Marie's friends. To Anne's enemies she became an implacable foe.

Chief among these last must be counted the Queen-Mother. Marie de Medici had moved heaven and earth to bring about the Franco-Spanish match and had achieved it in the teeth of her rebellious subjects. No sooner had she reached her objective than she seemed bent on wrecking her son's chance of matrimonial happiness. Jealousy was the key-note of her character. She could not endure the thought of anyone being in a position to influence her son and dreaded a younger, more beautiful woman taking her place in the public eye.

On the flimsy excuse that a young girl might be guilty of some breach of etiquette, she excluded Anne from formal functions and kept her as much as possible out of sight. At the same time, by a hundred subtle remarks, she implanted in her son's mind a dislike for the bride he hardly knew. In order to keep herself informed of what went on in the young Queen's apartments, she appointed adherents of her own to attend her. Among these was Armand de Richelieu, Bishop of Luçon, who was appointed early in 1616 as Almoner to the Queen. It is to those early days that the enmity between Richelieu and Marie de Rohan may be traced.

Armand Jean Duplessis de Richelieu was the younger son of a noble but impoverished provincial family. He had attended the Académie, the school of arms for members of the nobility, and planned a great military career for himself. A younger brother, destined to occupy the Bishopric of Luçon, which was one of the family assets,

suddenly retired into a monastery. To keep the revenues in the family, Armand was obliged to give up his martial ambitions and enter the Church.

At the early age of twenty-two, he was consecrated Bishop, but his fiery spirit would not let him vegetate in a muddy country diocese. He made his way to Paris to seek fame and fortune at the Court of Henry IV. An entry in his note book at that time illustrates his coldly logical brain, his shrewdness and his flair for supple diplomacy. It is headed: "Principles which I have laid down for myself respecting behavior at Court" and reads, in part:

"To speak as little as possible; to be silent often; to withdraw, adroitly, without lying, when the truth is dangerous; to burn all letters received; to be modest in coming forward (I have not held myself in sufficiently when I have spoken with great men); not to appear distracted when others are speaking (the King likes quick and frank answers and loves to be praised); to cease speaking when the King drinks—everything depends on his favor."

Henry treated the young cleric with his usual good-humored courtesy but made it clear that a bishop's place was in his diocese. Sorrowfully Richelieu returned to Luçon and possessed his soul in patience until the restless days of Marie de Medici's regency offered a fertile field for his talents.

Back again in Paris, he caught the eye of the Queen-Mother by his striking presence and won her favor by subtle flattery. He allowed her to feel that his

devotion sprang from a warmer feeling than loyalty to the crown. When she remarked that she had been fond of the lute in her younger days, he learned to play it and the Court was edified by the spectacle of the lean handsome Bishop "pouring out his music at the feet of the fat Queen."

Marie de Medici combined a fondness for ecclesiastics with a weakness for distinguished-looking men. Richelieu was given a place on the Council and his appointment as Almoner to the Queen was a further mark of favor.

Finding that his tactics had succeeded with the Queen-Mother, Richelieu tried to ingratiate himself with Anne of Austria. His efforts met with scant success. His advances, which he himself described as "fatherly efforts to show her kindness," were received with chilly hauteur.

Marie de Rohan, watching all this with eyes alight with laughter, would plan pitfalls for the ambitious young cleric and play practical jokes that were sore trials to his dignity. On one occasion Anne, probably coached by Marie, said that she longed to see again her native Spanish dance, the fandango. Richelieu fell into the trap and found himself committed to a promise to dance for the Queen. In a last frantic effort to save his dignity, he arranged that they should be alone, save for a musician behind a screen. Marie, however, smuggled all the maids-of-honor into the room and hid them behind the tapestry covering the walls. Richelieu entered in the conventional costume of green velvet adorned with bells. He wore a

high-crowned hat with a feather and carried castanets. In his sweeping clerical robes the young Bishop had a certain stately dignity. In this caricature of a costume he was grotesque.

Anne tried nobly to hide her amusement but the sight of the lean capering legs and the feather, waggling erratically, reduced her to helpless mirth. As the music stopped the arras was swept aside and revealed a row of maids-of-honor, holding their sides with suppressed laughter. Richelieu's face had been flushed with the unwonted exertion but now it turned pale with anger. With a few biting words he bowed low to the Queen and strode out of the room. All his life he was inordinately sensitive to ridicule and never forgave Anne for her part in this disgraceful affair.

Such undignified proceedings widened the breach between the Queen and her mother-in-law. Marie de Medici pounced on all these follies and repeated them, with appropriate comments, to her son. Soon she noted with satisfaction that Louis rarely visited his wife. He seemed wholly absorbed in hunting and falconry.

Anne blamed the Huntsman for her husband's neglect and added him to her growing list of enemies. She had no way of knowing that his violent preoccupation with sport was concealing a deeper design. Louis and d'Albert were after bigger game than deer. They were on the trail of the Italian Concini.

CHAPTER II

CONCINI had insulted the nobles with impunity. He brought about his own ruin when he kept his hat on in the presence of the King. It was the last of a long series of petty slights. Supremely confident in his position as unofficial step-father, Concini treated the lad with careless patronage, indifferent to his scowls.

Louis was a morbid youth, much given to brooding over his grievances. In spite of his ignominious position in the background, he had an acute sense of his own importance and every slight was treasured up in his retentive memory. As his hatred of Concini grew, he poured out his grievances to d'Albert, whom he found a most sympathetic confidant.

It was the moment for which the Huntsman had been waiting and working for years. With Louis king in fact as well as in name, there would be rich pickings for his favorite.

Skilfully d'Albert worked on the lad's feelings. He pointed out the many and glaring faults of the Queen-Mother's administration and deplored the fact that the nobles of France had been driven into open rebellion by the insufferable tyranny of Concini. Every word added fuel to the King's anger. At last even the thick-

skinned Italian noticed the lad's black looks, and blamed the Huntsman for them.

"Alberti, my friend," he lisped in his Italianate French, "the King looks at me with a furious eye. You shall answer to me for it."

Fortunately Concini was called away from Court by a new insurrection of the nobles headed by the great Duke de Condé. It failed and the leader of the aristocratic party was imprisoned. Meanwhile d'Albert worked swiftly and well. A selected few were admitted to the secret conclaves held nightly in the King's bedroom. A soldier, a gardener and a valet, they were a curious collection of conspirators but they accomplished what the greatest nobles in France had failed to do. Without money, men or propaganda they overthrew Concini, drove Marie de Medici from power and established Louis XIII on the throne of France.

The soldier was a certain Vitry, captain of the guard. He was asked to undertake the arrest of Concini, with a marshal's baton as the price of success. Fearing to trust any of his men, he enlisted three members of his own family. On April 24, 1617, they took their stand on the bridge leading to the Louvre. Loitering there, they looked like ordinary citizens but they carried swords and had muskets hidden under their cloaks.

Concini arrived, surrounded as usual by a magnificently arrayed escort of a hundred men. Vitry and his little band pushed their way through the crowd and reached the favorite's side. Vitry called on him loudly, in the King's name, to consider himself under arrest. Conceited to the last, Concini gasped "Arrest *me, me!*" A shot rang out and he fell from his horse, dead. While the escort was still paralyzed by surprise, the guardsman made his way back to the palace, still crying "In the King's name." At the Louvre they found wild confusion. Louis had been lifted onto a billiard table by d'Albert and was receiving the homage of the Court. He greeted Vitry with one of his rare smiles. "Now, thanks to you, I am really King."

Marie de Medici said unctuously, when she learned of her lover's death: "I have reigned for seven years. There only remains for me a crown in Heaven."

What d'Albert said is not recorded but he was a man of action rather than words. He emerged from the scramble a Marshal and Peer of France, the most influential man in the kingdom and the possessor of Concini's enormous fortune. The King could not do enough to show his favor to the man whose initiative had put him on the throne. Honors and estates were showered on the humble Huntsman, who was forthwith made Duke de Luynes.

The coup d'état was complete and the old régime a thing of the past. Finding Concini's dead body abandoned on the bridge, the mob, crazy with joy, tore it limb from limb. Each section of Paris clamored for a fragment and one sturdy laborer tore out the heart and roasted it. Leonore Galigaï, the favorite's wife, was included in the general hatred. Soldiers found her crouching in bed with the Queen-Mother's jewels hidden under the mattress. She was dragged out and burned three days later as a

witch. Marie de Medici herself was sent under strong guard to Blois where she remained in close confinement.

With her, of his own free will, went Richelieu. He was the only able man to whom she had shown favor and the only one who repaid her with loyalty. The coup d'état was a real tragedy to the young bishop. Five months before he had been made Secretary of State. Recognizing his ability, Louis and d'Albert would have confirmed the appointment, but Richelieu felt himself bound by ties of gratitude to his patroness, and followed her into banishment. He has been accused so often of being a cold-blooded opportunist that this sacrifice of his youthful ambitions should be remembered.

With the removal of the Queen-Mother and her coterie, the nobles flocked back to Court, eager to profit by the new régime. To their disgust they found that they had merely exchanged one favorite for another. While d'Albert had infinitely more tact than Concini, he was equally eager to line his own pockets and had a host of hungry relatives who must be provided with estates, titles and gratuities. As the Duke de Condé sourly remarked: "It is still the same old tavern. Only the sign has been changed."

D'Albert, or the Duke de Luynes, as we must now call him, was supreme and controlled every act of the King. He used his authority intelligently, however. He offended as few of the nobles as possible and made sensible provisions for the government of the country.

Louis might have fallen into worse hands. Cast to play the rôle of king on life's chess-board, he remained all his life a pawn, pushed about by stronger hands. It was his good fortune that, at every crisis, there stood someone at his elbow to tell him what to do. It is to his credit that he usually did what he was told.

Louis was rather a pathetic figure at this stage of his career. Flung without training into kingship, his interests were centred in his hawks and hounds, his toys and market-garden. Flung willy-nilly into marriage, he shrank from his wife and had given all the love of his warped little heart to the charming de Luynes. That versatile person could attend to the details of the government for him. A young husband is expected to look after his matrimonial affairs for himself.

Here Louis found himself wholly at a loss. He continued to ignore his matrimonial duties but etiquette demanded that he should go daily to his wife's apartments to pay his respects. These formal visits were misery to the awkward, stammering boy. The lovely Queen looked at him with reproachful eyes and, behind the respectful smiles of the ladies-in-waiting, he sensed a scorn of his inadequate manhood. His only consolation on these visits was the presence of Marie de Rohan. With her he felt cheerful and at ease. The blue eyes beaming over her fan gave him confidence; the gay laugh that greeted his stammering remarks made him feel witty. And here, for a marvel, was a woman who shared his enthusiasm.

Marie knew the fine points of a horse and how to train a falcon. She loved hunting, rode like a centaur and swam like a fish. With her he forgot his shyness and would talk eagerly, the words tumbling out helter-

skelter, his dark face flushed with excitement. Anne looked on in bewildered envy but with no feeling of jealousy. She knew that she had in Marie de Rohan a loyal friend and one wholly devoted to her interests.

It would be interesting to know what part, if any, Marie played in the coup d'état. The unhappiness of Anne had made her declare war on the Queen-Mother, to whom it was largely due. That she was on good terms with de Luynes is obvious from what follows. The Huntsman was ambitious but he was also in love, and the success of his wooing may have been dependent on the success of his conspiracy. That, however, is mere conjecture. We confine ourselves to facts.

Marie had reached the zenith of her beauty and was one of the most sought-after heiresses in France. Her father's wealth and position, her princely lineage and her ravishing beauty combined to make her a most desirable *partie* and her father's house in the Rue de Bethizy was thronged with eager suitors.

The possession of a daughter as lovely and as wilful as Marie was no small responsibility for a man who had numerous affairs of his own to attend to, and the Duke de Montbazon was ready to hand it over to any eligible suitor. There were many but Marie was hard to please. Then one day soon after the coup d'état came a formal proposal from Charles Honoré d'Albert, Duke de Luynes, Marshal of France, Peer of the Realm, etc., etc. It gave Montbazon much food for thought.

From the point of view of lineage, de Luynes was mere *canaille*, and quite unworthy of an

Marie de Rohan, Duchess de Chevreuse

(From a painting in the possession of the Duke de Vendôme, and now at Belmont Castle)

alliance with a Rohan. His family were provincial farmers and he himself was said to have been the son of a Canon of Marseilles by a chamber-maid. On the other hand, he was the friend of the King, the most powerful man in France and enormously wealthy. This last was a matter of some importance. Montbazon himself had immense revenues but was constitutionally incapable of handling money and was in no position to give his daughter a large *dot*.

De Luynes, it appeared, was not inclined to drive a hard bargain. He was genuinely in love and would have married Marie de Rohan if she had been a beggar maid instead of a member of the *haute noblesse*. Marie, too, somewhat to her father's surprise, was in favor of the match. The marriage was arranged and a contract drawn up by which the Duke promised to give his daughter a dowry of 200,000 crowns. This sum, incidentally, was never paid in full and the resulting law-suits dragged on into the next century.

Five months after the coup d'état, Marie de Rohan and Charles Honoré d'Albert, Duke de Luynes, were formally betrothed in the Queen's apartments in the presence of the King and a few of his suite. Two days later, Wednesday, September 13, 1617, the marriage was performed by the Archbishop of Tours. This aged but amorous ecclesiastic was destined to play a part in Marie's later life.

Louis took an eager interest in the marriage of his favorite. The ceremony was set for five o'clock in the morning but the King was up at three and seemed quite annoyed to find the bridegroom peacefully sleeping.

After a day spent in merry-making, the bridal couple set out for Lesigny-en-Brie, a chateau formerly owned by Concini and still full of his treasures. Their honeymoon was short, since neither de Luynes nor Marie cared to be long away from Court. On their return to Paris, de Luynes bought for his bride a magnificent mansion on the Rue St. Honoré, close to the Louvre. It cost him a small fortune but he could well afford it. Louis continued to shower gifts on the favorite and his wealth was mounting daily.

Partly in a desire to please de Luynes, partly because of his liking for Marie herself, the King now paid her a signal honor. There had been constant friction between Anne's Spanish chaperones and her French attendants, and Louis had sided with his countrywomen. He hated the sour faces and coif-like head-dresses of the duennas and declared that "those nuns" got on his nerves. Anne herself admitted that they cast a pall of gloom over her little Court. In the first flush of his new authority, Louis sent them all back to Spain and appointed Marie Superintendent of the Queen's Household. This gave her precedence over all the ladies of the Court and caused much ill-feeling. Elderly dowagers whose rank entitled them to such a responsible post were offended by the appointment of a girl of seventeen.

Anne was delighted. She looked forward to a gayer, freer life under the new régime and was not disappointed. Marie's duties included handing the Queen her vest when she dressed, holding her pin-cushion, sitting with her indoors, riding in her carriage when she went

abroad, attending her at meals and supervising the details of the royal toilet. These duties, all of which were considered marks of favor shown only to ladies of high rank, kept the two girls constantly together and their intimacy flourished.

Marie's popularity with the King, too, did much to enliven Anne's life. Louis would invite the ladies, the Queen among them, to accompany him on his hunting parties, and would become quite gallant in the informality of the chase. Etiquette was relaxed and an air of freedom and gaiety pervaded the Court.

At first Anne disliked de Luynes but gradually became reconciled to her friend's husband. This further helped to bring Louis and his wife together. Gay laughter, irrepressible giggles, mischievous pranks and spicy jests were now the order of the day in the Queen's apartments, and they were all inspired by the impish Superintendent of the Household. Madame de Motteville, who disliked Marie, wrote disapprovingly in her Memoirs of "her gay and lively humor, which turned the most serious things of gravest consequence into matters of jest and laughter."

Sixteen months after her marriage, Marie gave birth to a daughter. The King, who was then on a trip to Calais, ordered the guns of the city to fire a salute in honor of the event and gave 80,000 francs toward the expenses of the christening. On his return to Paris he greeted the Queen and then hastened to the room where Marie was still in bed. There, according to an eye-witness, "he kissed both her and the infant tenderly."

The incident set the gossips' tongues wagging merrily and there had already been some grounds for scandal. Louis quite openly showed his liking for the girl and had been in the habit of having supper in her apartments almost every evening. Tallemant des Reaux, a witty and observant writer of the time, believed the friendship to be platonic. He writes in his memoirs: "The King never had wit enough to supplant the Duke de Luynes, but everybody would have been delighted if he had done it, and she certainly was worth the trouble it would have cost him."

The King's interest in Marie was given added piquancy by the fact that he was still leading a celibate life. Not since his wedding night had he approached his bride.

Such amazing continence was not to go unnoticed, and there was consternation in diplomatic circles. Despatches were written from Paris to the various European courts in which this incredible state of affairs was discussed with alarming frankness. The Papal Envoy wrote to Rome: "These Spaniards, so ardent, are in despair and say that the King is good for nothing." He added his own analysis of the situation, explaining that Louis' first efforts "had not been crowned with the success he looked for nor the pleasure of which he had dreamed." Others, less charitable, accused the reluctant bridegroom of everything from impotence to homosexuality.

A special envoy was sent from Madrid to remonstrate with the recalcitrant Louis but he continued to

shy away from his matrimonial duties like a frightened horse or, to quote a French writer, "like an insolvent debtor who delays an accounting." Distressed by the deplorably intact virginity of his daughter, the King of Spain wrote her a long letter, urging her to arouse her husband's interest by "coquetry and a thousand feminine wiles."

It was all in vain. Anne had been brought up in the rigidly conventional atmosphere of the Spanish Court and was quite incapable of displaying her charms to the best advantage. Then Marie de Rohan took a hand in the game. She, too, thought that a little harmless coquetry might arouse the King's jealousy and thus succeed where the exhortations of envoys had failed. Doubtless with the best intentions, she set herself to complete the education of the prim and proper Spaniard. In this she was ably assisted by two of the ladies-in-waiting who were as gay and devil-may-care as herself. In a short time the Papal Envoy was writing to the King of Spain to warn him that his daughter was being corrupted by the "licentious conversation of the Princess de Conti, the Duchess de Luynes and Mademoiselle de Verneuil."

This lively trio opened Anne's eyes to the fact that the world was full of charming men, all eager to throw their hearts at her feet. They instructed her in the arts of love and awoke in her the desire for gallantry and amorous dalliance. Their remarks were supplemented by a highly-spiced and wholly scandalous collection of poems, "Le Cabinet Satyrique," which Marie smuggled into the Queen's apartments.

From theory, they passed to practice. In Madrid the Princess Elizabeth was obliged to warn Charles Stuart that "It is customary here to poison all gentlemen suspected of gallantry towards the Queen of Spain." Anne had first to be convinced that her admirers would not necessarily be poisoned in France. Marie then produced a succession of gallants who paid ardent court to their lovely Queen.

First came the Duke de Bellegarde, a sprightly old buck who had been one of the shining lights in the Court of Henry III and the friend of Henry of Navarre. His courtly wooing delighted Anne, flattered by the admiration she inspired in his aged heart.

Then came Prince Henry de Montmorenci, one of the greatest peers of the realm and "the sweetest prince in Europe." Tall, handsome, courtly, he was the beau-ideal of a cavalier and his only blemish was a slight squint. He sighed, languished, vowed eternal devotion and kept Anne in a delicious turmoil by his ardor. All of this was duly reported to Louis.

Urged either by jealousy or by his sense of kingly duty, Louis at last decided to consummate his marriage. First, however, he availed himself of what a French writer calls "a novel and highly-spiced aphrodisiac." For the details we are indebted to the records of the Spanish Ambassador. In fact, most of the intimate history of the time is drawn from such sources. Ambassadors, as a class, appear to have been arrant gossips and many a spicy bit of scandal has been unearthed from the dusty diplomatic archives of Europe.

In January, 1619, the Duke d'Elboeuf married Louis' half-sister, Mademoiselle de Vendôme, daughter of Henry IV by Gabrielle d'Estrées. This is the Ambassador's account of what happened:

"When night came, the King was pleased to enter the nuptial chamber; furthermore, he even insisted on sharing the bed of the married couple so that he could witness the consummation of the marriage. The act was repeated more than once, to the great pleasure of His Majesty who applauded vigorously."

The bride, not at all embarrassed by the King's enthusiastic interest in the proceedings, advised him to go and do likewise. Five days later Louis announced that he would visit the Queen. When the time came, however, his courage failed and he took refuge in his own bed, where de Luynes found him. Kicking, struggling, sobbing with rage and fear, His Bashful Majesty was carried into his wife's room, tucked into her bed and left to his fate.

Not even de Luynes' drastic methods could overcome the young King's anaphrodism. Herouard, the royal physician, made careful notes in his diary of the occasions when Louis visited his wife. The dates are significant; March 18, 1619, September 23, 1620, December 7, 1620. Louis is not altogether to blame for his excessive continence. Always frail, he suffered from epileptic fits and recurrent attacks of enteric, and the medical treatment in vogue was apt to be more dangerous than any disease. In one year the wretched youth was bled forty-seven times, given twelve kinds of powerful drugs

and two hundred and fifteen enemas. It is hardly surprising that his vitality was low.

Neither is it surprising that Anne found this intermittent courtship unsatisfactory. With unabated ardor she threw herself into the delicious distractions of illicit gallantry. Opinion is divided as to the seriousness of these romantic interludes. Some writers consider her to have been, like Cæsar's wife, above reproach. Others credit her with more than her fair share of lovers. Perhaps the most damaging testimony comes from the memoirs of Madame de Motteville, the friend of her later years. The good dame whitewashes Anne assiduously and pictures her as a stainless martyr, which gives added point to an unguarded remark in the memoirs.

She writes: "The Duchess de Luynes was not long in being liked by the Queen for the sake of the good terms she was thus enabled to have with the King, who liked the Duchess, and the hunting and riding parties which she was now invited to join. She thus did enjoy certain periods of pleasure *without other bitterness than that of becoming pregnant several times and miscarrying from having ridden too hard in hunting*." This statement is interesting, since Madame de Motteville was ignorant of the court physician's reprehensible habit of keeping a diary. It is even more interesting in view of later events.

Marie's own matrimonial affairs appear to have been eminently satisfactory. She was on very good terms with de Luynes, who proved himself a generous and devoted husband. In 1620, she had a son, Charles Louis. Once again Louis acted as godfather, ordering that

the service for the christening should be the one used only for royal children.

For de Luynes, the first years of Louis' reign had been cloudless and triumphant; but the path of the favorite is hard, and he was faced with many difficult problems. From being Marshal, he had been elevated by the infatuated King to the office of Lord Constable of France, an honor formerly held only by such tried and valiant warriors as Bertrand du Guesclin or Duke Anne de Montmorenci. To give it to a man who had no experience of war—or indeed of anything but falconry—was a fatuous piece of business and roused the enmity of all those nobles who had a better claim to such a distinction. De Luynes, however, felt that he had a latent genius for war and speedily embroiled the King in a struggle with the Huguenots. Simultaneously civil war burst out anew, with Marie de Medici now at the head of the nobles. She had been rescued from her prison at Blois, being let down from her window by a rope. The story goes that she nearly wrecked the attempt by her determination to take along all her clothes, jewels and two maids. However, she escaped and took refuge with the Duke d'Epernon.

The nobles who had flocked back to Court after the death of Concini soon became discouraged when they found how few were the pickings after de Luynes and his relatives had been provided for. Thoroughly disgruntled, they retired to their estates and were more than ready to rally round the Queen-Mother when she raised the standard of revolt against her son.

With half the nobles in France on the war-path and the Huguenots in open revolt, de Luynes had quite a pretty problem on his inexperienced hands. He showed less than his usual intelligence in handling it. Louis loved war, but he did not enjoy defeat. He blamed all reverses on the Constable while claiming the credit for victories himself.

On one side were two inexperienced generals; on the other, Marie de Medici, whose policy changed with each gust of passion. Both armies were made up of small troops under their feudal lords, all of whom were ready to switch to the winning side. There was much marching and counter-marching but whenever a battle seemed imminent, a conference would be held. Terms would be arranged and a few leaders on one side or the other bought over.

In all this manœuvring, Richelieu was constantly at the side of the Queen-Mother and his was the only consistent policy. He realized that there was nothing to be gained from civil war and wished to restore his royal mistress to her place at Court without bloodshed. He tried to deal directly with de Luynes and even arranged a marriage between his niece and Combalet, the favorite's nephew. The two men, however, were mutually distrustful and the negotiations came to nothing.

Finally, more by good luck than good management, the royal forces inflicted a crushing defeat on the rebel army. In the treaty that followed, Richelieu was able to secure terms very favorable to the Queen-Mother. She returned in triumph to Paris and with her

she took the man who was largely responsible for her success.

One war was over, but the Huguenots still kept up a stubborn resistance and de Luynes seemed unable to bring the affair to a conclusion. His tactics were fumbling and indecisive and he lacked the personal heroism that was expected of leaders in those days of small armies and hand-to-hand fighting. On one occasion, instead of taking his place in the centre of the front line, he watched proceedings from a nice safe hill in the background. Ever after it was known as the "Hill of the Constable." His prudence roused a storm of contemptuous ridicule that did much to weaken his already waning prestige. He had alienated the nobles by greed, the army by his incapacity and the King by his ostentatious display of power.

"There goes King Luynes," said Louis bitterly one day when the favorite went by with his glittering train.

From this time, too, dates Marie's loss of the royal favor. There seems to be no definite reason for the change in the King's attitude towards one who had, up to that time, stood so high in his esteem; but it is difficult to analyze the mental processes of a man who was both secretive and neurasthenic. Perhaps the growing unpopularity of de Luynes reacted on his wife; perhaps the Queen-Mother regaled her son with too many tales of the frivolities in the Queen's household; perhaps Marie's own free-and-easy manners had begun to grate on a king who took himself seriously.

One indiscretion we know of, which was well calculated to annoy Louis. In September 1621 the King and de Luynes were engaged in a desultory siege of the Huguenot fortress of Montaubon while the Court was established in a nearby town. One afternoon Anne and Marie rode over to the camp to visit their respective husbands and delayed their return until after dark. Marie suggested sleeping in camp but Louis objected that there were no beds. "Surely the King has a bed," laughed Marie with a meaning glance from her mischievous eyes, and pirouetted out of the tent, leaving Louis and Anne alone. It must be admitted that Marie could, at times, act like a gamin, and Louis was not the man to be handled with such airy insouciance.

Whatever the cause, or causes, the King began to frown blackly whenever the name of his former playmate was mentioned and he pored gloomily over the lengthy letters that reached him from Paris. Marie de Medici, still eager to keep her son and his wife apart, retailed terrible accounts of the doings in the Queen's apartments. Before Louis' jealous eyes passed a procession of gallants, all of whom, he believed, were receiving more than ordinary courtesy from his wife, and he blamed it all on the gay Duchess. Before her appearance, Anne had been a model of demure docility but now——!

Louis brooded, suspected, and nourished a growing grievance against the two persons to whom he had once shown every possible favor. Marie was wrecking the reputation of his wife and the peace of his household, while de Luynes was making an unmitigated mess of

the military situation. Louis returned to Paris in the late winter and was revolving schemes for ridding himself of them, when de Luynes saved him the trouble. At the siege of Monheur, the Constable was stricken by a virulent fever and passed away in four days, neglected in sickness and unmourned in death. Louis merely shrugged his shoulders indifferently when he heard of the death of the man who had once had all the love of his heart. His attitude was reflected everywhere. The body was hustled unceremoniously into a coffin and taken to his home for burial. Only a few lackeys accompanied it and they were seen by an eye-witness playing piquet on the bier.

Even Marie seems to have taken her widowhood lightly. She and her husband had been on excellent terms during his life-time, but de Luynes had been much away from Paris. During his absence Marie had found consolation in the arms of the most charming gallant at court, Claude de Lorraine, now Duke de Chevreuse. While de Luynes was alive, the lovers had met at the house of Claude's sister, the Princess de Conti. After his death, the intrigue was carried on so flagrantly that the whole Court was talking about it, and one contemporary writer says: "they flaunted their love shamelessly before the whole of Paris."

The scandal gave Louis the opportunity he wanted. He first ordered Marie to move from the Louvre to her own town house. As Superintendent of the Queen's Household, however, it was necessary for her to have her apartments in the Palace. He compromised by having her moved from her luxurious suite to a smaller apartment

high up under the eaves. Marie was *enceinte* and about Christmas time gave birth to a daughter. This time the King did not rush to her side and make a fuss over the child. On the contrary, he was elaborately unconcerned and made it clear that the affairs of the Constable's widow were of no interest to him.

There were more vital matters to occupy his mind. The war against the Huguenots dragged on and necessitated frequent trips to the scene of action. No doubt these journeys were a relief from domestic complications at the Louvre. Marie de Medici wearied his ears with complaints about his wife and was voluble in her criticism of his handling of State affairs. Anne was in an interesting condition and expected to present him with an heir in the early summer.

It was emphatically a time for the widowed Marie to act with discretion. Instead she chose this critical juncture to make a bad mistake.

CHAPTER III

ONE evening in March the Queen was strolling through the Louvre, hand in hand with Marie and Mademoiselle de Verneuil. For no apparent reason they began to run a race down the long salon. Anne tripped on a low dais, fell heavily to the floor and was carried up to her apartments in great distress. After three days of anxiety it was announced that this was another case of Love's Labor Lost.

There is something very curious about this episode. Who started the race, and why? Anne had all the bodily indolence of a Spaniard. She would never run if she could stroll, or walk if she could be carried. If Mademoiselle de Verneuil suggested the fatal race, the Superintendent of the Household should have negatived the proposal. One is forced to the conclusion that Marie was to blame, which brings us again to the question, why? As the mother of three children, she knew that maternity and athletics do not blend. Familiar as she was with affairs at Court, she must have known that the birth of an heir would go far to reconcile the royal couple.

Did she perhaps fear that the child would have a betraying squint? And was she equally responsible for the minor disasters caused, officially, by the Queen's energy in the hunting field? It is a nice problem for ama-

teur psychologists who will find many others in this veracious chronicle.

Louis was away from Paris when he learned that his hopes were not to be realized. At once he wrote furiously, dismissing Marie from Court and ordering Anne to sever all connection with her friend. His rage with the mischievous marplot knew no bounds and he was determined to put an end to the deplorable state of affairs in his household.

Anne wept and wailed, declared that these things happened in the very best families and vowed that the *contretemps* was in no way the fault of her darling Marie, without whom she could not live. Louis was adamant and ordered Marie to leave the Louvre without delay. Sadly she gathered together her possessions, took an emotional farewell of the Queen and departed to her own house.

It was an ignominious end to her triumphal progress, a catastrophe as overwhelming as it was unforeseen. A few months before Marie had been perched on the highest pinnacle of fortune. The friend of the King, the intimate companion of the Queen, wife of the Constable and spoiled darling of the Court, her position had seemed impregnable. Now she found herself a widow, dismissed from the Court in disgrace.

To most people, all would have seemed irretrievably lost but Marie had not begun to fight. She had two potent weapons, her beauty and her fine keen brain. With these she set herself to recover all she had lost and did it in exactly three weeks. Her fall from favor was due to

a piece of brainless folly but she retrieved the disaster by masterly strategy.

In this, the first engagement in a long battle of wits, she used the initiative, the lightning intuition and the seductive charm that were to mark her incredible career. Above all, she showed her ability to select unerringly the most fitting tool for the work in hand. She left the Court a widow. She returned in triumph leading in the flowery chains of matrimony the dazed but blissful Claude de Lorraine.

At the time of his marriage Claude de Lorraine was over forty but was considered one of the most eligible bachelors in France. His portraits show a long face with high cheek-bones and finely-cut aristocratic features. He was tall, slender, a graceful dancer and a superb swordsman. He would flirt with a woman or run his rapier through a man with the same ineffable courtliness. It is no wonder that his path was strewn with the petals of fallen virtue.

His life had been largely spent in the pursuit of beauty. At the Court of Henry IV he had wooed the King's mistresses with ardor and fought duels about them on the slightest excuse. He once chased the Duke de Bellegarde into the royal bedchamber and ran him through the leg for some jest about Henriette d'Entragues. After that grave breach of etiquette he was invited to travel in England and there struck up a lasting friendship with his cousin, Charles Stuart, later Charles I.

On his return Claude must needs devote himself to the Countess de Moret and was told that a trip

to Turkey might broaden his outlook on life. Among a host of others, he had affairs with Madame de Villars, the famous Angelique de Paulet and the elderly Madame de Fervaques, who allowed him to spend her vast fortune in exchange for his favors. For all his impetuosity in attack, the noble lord knew when to retreat and had escaped the bonds of holy matrimony until captured by Marie de Rohan.

Popular as he was in drawing-rooms, Claude de Lorraine was a fighting man. He was absolutely fearless in battle and contrived to take part in every war that came his way. During the early years of the Regency he fought for Marie de Medici against the rebels and at the battle of Négrepelisse he led a heroic charge against the Huguenots that saved the day. When no wars were available he fought duels and was considered the finest swordsman in France.

To his personal charms, Claude de Lorraine added the glamor of exalted birth. He was a member of the semi-royal House of Guise and was related to the English royal house through his aunt, Mary Queen of Scots. He was a cousin of the Duke of Lorraine and his sister was the wife of the Prince de Conti, a kinsman of Louis himself.

Claude had luxurious apartments in the Louvre, immediately above those of the King. He called Marie de Medici "Aunt" and was looked on as one of the royal family. Louis had bestowed on him the duchy of Chevreuse and, as a further mark of favor, had appointed him Grand Chamberlain of France.

This was the lover in whose arms Marie had whiled away the hours during the absence of her husband at the wars. Even to such a sophisticated connoisseur of feminine charms the experience had been unique and had made his blasé heart beat faster. Seeking some way of retrieving her position at Court, Marie decided that Claude's ardor could be turned to good account. She sent for him, only to find that he was away from Paris.

Nothing daunted, she sent a messenger after him with a letter. Madame could, on occasion, be as diplomatically circuitous and obscure as you please, but the letter she wrote to her lover was starkly direct. "I have been dismissed," she wrote, "and can only escape disgrace by your marrying me. I beg your consent."

When Claude de Lorraine received this uncompromising epistle he was aghast. Wedding-bells rang loud in his bachelor ears and he saw his cherished freedom vanishing. Marie could well afford to take this line. A Rohan cannot be seduced and abandoned with impunity like a kitchen-maid, and Claude realized, too late, that their affair had been carried on with a disastrous lack of discretion.

He was travelling at the time with two friends, one of whom was Fontenay-Mareuil, later ambassador in London. In this crisis he asked their advice and was strongly advised to refuse. They pointed out that his own position as Grand Chamberlain might be jeopardized by marriage to a woman who was out of favor with the King, and who bore the name of the hated Duke de Luynes. Furthermore, they reminded him that the lady's

reputation for gallantry made it unnecessary for him to atone for his indiscretion by a chivalrous gesture.

Chevreuse hated making decisions but finally yielded to the persuasion of his companions. He sent a polite but firm refusal to the proposal and continued his journey.

For the moment Marie was beaten, but in her beauty she had a more potent weapon and she brought it into play. On his return to Paris, Claude called upon her to express his regrets in person. From that moment he was lost. The warm glow from those violet eyes melted his resolution. The magnetic lure of the loveliness he had enjoyed intoxicated him. Half-hypnotized by the vivid personality and strong will of the woman, he succumbed. Before he came out of the anæsthetic he was married.

Perhaps he had vaguely hoped that his family would intervene but in his sister, Marie had a strong ally. The merry Princess de Conti had fostered the intrigue and now engineered the marriage. She rounded up the heads of her own and her husband's families and secured an imposing list of signatures to the marriage contract.

It was not a difficult task. To a family who stood so near the throne, the King's disapproval was little more than a family squabble. Apart from that, the match had much to recommend it. Marie was of the bluest blood in France and immensely wealthy. She had been somewhat indiscreet in her amour with Chevreuse but the estate left by the dead de Luynes more than sufficed to gild over the stain on her reputation. In any case, it was

doubtful who among them could cast the first stone. The Princess de Conti herself was the acknowledged mistress of Bassompierre and it was an ugly wife, in those days, who could not pride herself on at least one lover.

Marie's father alone refused to countenance this latest escapade, and the marriage contract was signed on his behalf by a notary. By it Marie gave Chevreuse 300,000 crowns and all her estates. In exchange she was to receive an income of 10,000 crowns a year, chargeable on the duchy of Chevreuse, and the Chateau of Dampierre for her own residence.

It was April Fool's Day, when Marie left the Louvre in disgrace. On April 22, 1622, she became the wife of the noble and puissant Claude de Lorraine, Prince de Joinville, Duke de Chevreuse, Grand Chamberlain of France, etc. It was check to the King.

The marriage of Marie de Rohan to the Duke de Luynes had been celebrated in the royal chapel in the presence of the King himself. Her second marriage was performed in private and kept a secret from all but a few intimates. Convinced that Louis would refuse his consent, she threw etiquette to the winds and neglected to ask for it. Chevreuse may have had scruples about flouting the royal authority but he was swept along by Marie's irresistible will, and surrendered meekly.

Immediately after the ceremony the bride and groom left unostentatiously for Lesigny-en-Brie, the Chateau where Marie had spent her first honeymoon. Behind them Paris and the Court buzzed like a bee-hive.

Louis scowled, Marie de Medici stormed, and the Court at large abandoned itself to ribald laughter. The less charitable made pointed remarks about dead men's shoes, cuckoo's nests, etc.; others rejoiced openly at the success of Marie's brilliant coup. Tallemant de Reaux wrote in his diary. "It is *the* joke of Paris."

Ignorant of, or indifferent to, the furore at Court, Marie and her husband spent a few days at Lesigny, then went on to Dampierre. This was the chateau given to Marie by the terms of her marriage contract and was to be her favorite residence. Here she won the hearts of the tenants by her gracious charm and plunged into eager plans for refurnishing and improving the stately mansion. In June they returned to Paris and took up their residence at Marie's magnificent town house, henceforth to be known as the Hôtel de Chevreuse.

Chevreuse placidly presented himself at Court and took up his duties as Grand Chamberlain. The chilly reception given him by Louis and the Queen-Mother would have driven the average courtier to suicide or voluntary exile. Chevreuse refused to be ruffled by the frowns of his royal aunt and cousin. Secure in the knowledge of his own unassailable position, he waited calmly for the storm to blow over. Marie, meanwhile, remained in tactful seclusion at home.

Chevreuse was justified in his attitude. For political reasons the friendship of England was desirable and the Duke's popularity in English court circles made him an important diplomatic factor. Louis could not afford to antagonize the intimate friend of the Prince of Wales.

Gradually the chill in the air subsided and the Duke was soon entrenched as strongly as ever in the good graces of the royal family. Under the circumstances it was absurd to exclude his wife from Court. There was the additional fact that her father was Governor of Paris and one of the most loyal adherents of the throne. Late in June Marie was formally summoned to appear at Court. The office of Superintendent of the Queen's Household had been abolished but Chevreuse was First Gentleman of the King's Bedchamber. This automatically admitted his wife to attendance on the Queen.

Once again Anne and Marie were reunited after a parting that had seemed interminable and they were soon as inseparable as ever. Biting his nails with annoyance, Louis was obliged to admit that he could do nothing about it. For the first time, but not the last, Marie had beaten him on his own ground.

Marie, now the Duchess de Chevreuse, returned to Court to find a new star rising in the political heavens, a new influence dominating the feeble King. The death of de Luynes had left Louis without the moral support he needed and the sympathetic companionship he craved. Left to himself, he was helpless but he shrank from the jealous tyranny of his mother. Gradually but inevitably, as though drawn by some magnetic force, he came under the spell of a still stronger personality. From this year dates the alliance between Richelieu and Louis XIII, reigning priest and puppet King.

The young Bishop of Luçon had returned to Court with Marie de Medici after the family reconcilia-

tion and had been given a small post in the government. Realizing that she had in him a strong supporter, the Queen-Mother was forever dinning his praises in her son's ears. She even persuaded him to ask the Pope to grant her protégé a Cardinal's hat. The application was granted and in this same year Richelieu exchanged the purple of a bishop for the trailing scarlet robes of a Cardinal. In congratulating him Louis said with his sour smile: "You would never have got the hat while de Luynes lived."

With increased prestige Richelieu found more scope for his unrivalled ability and was often called upon to advise the King. Soon he was constantly at Louis' side, shrewd and deferential. Shaggy black head and scarlet skull-cap were bent together over state papers or military maps and it was the subtle politician, the priest who had been trained for a soldier, who suggested policies or sketched a plan of campaign.

Stately in his princely scarlet, Richelieu swept through the aimless, chattering throng of courtiers. Outwardly controlled and reserved, he was seething with ambition, thrilling with the prospect of success. Once again he had his foot on the first rung of the ladder of fortune. This time there should be no misstep. He had reached a high point before as much through his cultivation of Marie de Medici as through his genuine ability. This time it was the young King who must be flattered and cajoled.

It was a problem to tax his skill and subtlety to the utmost. Louis had an exaggerated sense of his own importance and was quick to resent any attempt to

infringe on his royal prerogatives. He must be consulted about every trifle and nothing might be done without his sanction. On the other hand, he easily became absorbed in some futile amusement and would fly into a rage if interrupted.

His ministers often waited for hours to get his signature to some unimportant document while he made candy, trained his magpies or shaved one of his suite. He was at that time obsessed with the idea of becoming an expert barber and practised on his attendants to the detriment of their mustachios.

What made Louis most difficult to handle was his secretive disposition. He would listen patiently to an argument and then walk away without comment. Woe betide the unlucky wight who took silence for consent.

Through this maze of contradictions Richelieu felt his way with consummate tact. He contrived to present his opinions in such a way that Louis thought them the product of his own mediocre brain. Under his delicate strong fingers the most intricate problems unravelled themselves, and statecraft became delightfully easy. Louis turned more and more to the adviser who combined tact with ability. Upheavals in the Council of State cleared the way for promotion and within the year Richelieu became, for the second time, Secretary of State. France and France's King alike had found their master.

Louis was content to resign himself to this new domination and Marie de Medici was delighted to find her protégé in such a position of influence. She had visions of controlling her son through him. Only Queen

Anne remained as hostile to the Cardinal as she had been when he was only her Almoner.

Richelieu's attitude toward the Queen has agitated historians and novelists from that day to this. We have her own statement, quoted by Madame de Motteville, that he tried to make love to her and "spoke to her in too gallant a manner for an enemy, and made her a passionate speech which she was about to answer with anger and contempt, when the King entered the room and interrupted her reply." In another passage in her Memoirs, Madame de Motteville writes: "It is believed that the Cardinal had in reality more love than hate for the Queen; but, seeing that she was not inclined to wish him well he did her harm with the King, either from necessity or for revenge. The first signs of his affection were the persecutions he inflicted on her and this novel manner of loving lasted until the end of his life."

It is possible that Anne's beauty appealed to a heart always susceptible to feminine charm, but Richelieu was not the man to endure contemptuous rebuffs. Anne's determined hostility and the ridicule heaped upon him by her gay coterie quickly turned any love he may have felt into hate.

It is more probable that his gallant advances were dictated by the same motives that made him whisper sweet nothings in the ready ear of Marie de Medici. Anne's friendship would be useful to him, politically, and he sought to win her favor in the only way that occurred to him. When that failed, he set himself deliberately to discredit her with the King. There were no half-measures with Richelieu. He took the attitude: "He that is not with me is against me!" Anne had rejected his overtures and her tribulations began.

The unhappy Queen had enjoyed a few brief years of happiness during the exile of her mother-in-law, while Marie was Superintendent of the Household. The disaster of March put an end to that bright interlude. From then on the Queen-Mother and Richelieu between them effectually prevented any rapprochement between the royal couple.

Louis was regaled with highly-colored stories of the admiration his wife inspired among the courtiers, of her frivolous amusements and the undignified jests of her intimate circle. Her every word and act were reported in a way designed to keep his jealous wrath smouldering. The indifference he had always showed turned to definite dislike and all chance of marital happiness was lost.

The blame for this state of affairs rests largely upon the shoulders of Marie de Chevreuse. She found the Queen a demure young thing prepared to comport herself in a decorous manner and to produce heirs to the throne at every opportunity. Left to herself Anne would have lived a life of innocuous boredom, neglected by her husband, pitied by her friends and respected by all. Under Marie's enlivening influence, the Spaniard developed an alarming fondness for amorous dalliance and whiled away the hours with unseemly pranks and jests. The Queen's apartments became the centre for all the

frivolous spirits at Court and the days were filled with impromptu entertainments varied with formal ballets and masques. Anne was passionately fond of dancing and always took part in these elaborate pageants.

At night there would be State balls with the old Louvre ablaze with light. From a thousand candles the soft radiance streamed down over the dancing throng and struck fire from many a priceless gem. Silks and satins, velvet and ruffles blended in a gorgeous riot of color. Many a courtier spent his fortune on his back and appeared bedecked like a peacock. Plumed hats swept the floor in courtly greeting; brocaded skirts rustled and billowed as ladies swayed through the mazes of the dance. Red heels twinkled and diamond buckles flashed in the candle-light.

Those were gay days at Court and gayest of all the revellers was Marie de Rohan, Duchess de Chevreuse. There is a picture of her with her golden curls caught in a pearl-strewn net. Her alluring eyes echo the invitation of the perfect mouth. A lacy ruff frames her lovely throat and falls apart to reveal the delicious curves of a bosom only half concealed by ropes of pearls.

Once again she is the darling of the Court and mistress of its revels. She amuses the Queen, baits the Cardinal and treats the King with an airy insolence that leaves him helpless and fuming. Dancing, flirting, carefree as thistle-down, she basks in the sun of popularity with never a thought of to-morrow. These three years are the last years of peace and happiness that she is to know and she enjoys every hour of them. Soon she will be up to

her lovely neck in intrigue. She will be exiled and will return, only to be exiled again. She will ride for her life while her friends fall beneath the axe of Richelieu. She will know love and death and hate and fear, but she will never lose her gay courage nor the conviction that somehow, somewhere, she will win the game.

CHAPTER IV

IN the spring of 1624 there appeared in Paris two young Englishmen with the aggressively ordinary names of John and Thomas Smith. These gentlemen, undistinguished except by their rare good looks, were en route to Spain with a small retinue of servants and stopped over in Paris for a few days to see the sights. Wandering about, as tourists will, they found a group of citizens watching the rehearsal of an open-air ballet which was to be given by the Court.

The Duke de Montbazon, passing by, saw two Englishmen who seemed to be of the better class and invited them to enter the palace grounds, where they could watch the performance in comfort. By that simple act of courtesy Marie's father changed the course of European history and set in motion a train of events that was to involve his daughter in the most incredible adventures.

That evening one of the travellers wrote a letter to his father. After giving some account of their travels, he said: "To-day we saw the young Queen of France and Madame Royale at the practising of a masque and in it danced the Queen with as many as nineteen fair dancing ladies, among whom the Queen of France is the handsomest; the which hath wrought in me a great desire to see her sister."

This letter was addressed to His Majesty, King James I of England and Scotland and was signed: "Your humble son and servant

Charles"

What the royal Stuarts lacked in commonsense and character they made up in romance. Young Charles Stuart, like the prince in the fairy tale, was travelling incognito in search of a bride.

A match had already been proposed between him and Maria Althea of Spain, younger sister of Anne of Austria, and negotiations between the two Courts were under way. Charles was not content to leave the matter of his marriage to the diplomats. He must needs see his prospective bride and woo her for himself.

Thus we find him in Paris under the guise of a young gentleman making the Grand Tour. With him was the most romantic figure in Europe, the Duke of Buckingham, whom Richelieu once described as being "as dangerous to kingdoms as to husbands."

The sight of Anne of Austria, as Charles said, made him more eager to see her sister. He hastened on to Madrid, leaving behind him in Paris the woman he was destined to marry. The "Madame Royale," mentioned in his letter, was Louis' young sister, Henriette Marie, who was to be Queen of England in place of the Spanish Infanta.

On Buckingham the beauty of the Queen had a more dynamic effect. Until now his amorous career had been a monotonous series of successes. Before his ineffable charm maidens forgot their virtue and matrons for-

swore their vows. No woman had been able to resist his wooing. For him, to be seen was to conquer. In Paris retribution overtook him. At the first sight of Anne dancing in the ballet he was smitten with one of those fatal passions that defy explanation. Until his death that romantic folly obsessed him and drove him to the most extravagant lunacies.

Many writers have described the Duke of Buckingham. Hundreds of adjectives have been squandered in an attempt to recreate his breath-taking beauty, his physical perfection, his winning wit. It seems impossible to capture in a net of words the elusive charm that won men and women alike. He was a glamorous figure but he had need of his magnetism to offset his defects of temperament. Buckingham was as vain as a peacock, as unstable as water and completely lacking in good judgment. Yet this brainless coxcomb was the chosen councillor of two kings and the most powerful man in England.

George Villiers was of humble parentage but, through the help of influential friends, secured a position as page at the English Court. There his fatal beauty caught the roving eye of James I, a naughty old scamp with a penchant for handsome boys. In a very short time Villiers was raised to the peerage as Duke of Buckingham and showered with gifts. With an eye to the future, he cultivated the Prince of Wales and won his affection. He thus swayed both King and heir-apparent and his influence in the State was immeasurable. His whims directed the policy of the Crown and his emotions had more

The Duke of Buckingham
(Rubens. Pitti, Florence)

effect on history than the reasoned arguments of statesmen.

The trip to Madrid was a case in point. England was strongly Protestant in sentiment and regarded the King of Spain as the incarnation of His Satanic Majesty. For some reason Buckingham set his heart on an Anglo-Spanish match. He convinced the King, won over the Prince and carried him off under the very nose of a violently antagonistic parliament.

Once he had won his point his enthusiasm waned. No sooner had he seen Anne in Paris than he began to evolve schemes for seeing her again. He lost interest in the Spanish match and was eager to get back to England so that he could further his own romantic passion. It was in this state of mind that he travelled on to Madrid.

Once there the incognito was dropped and the Prince of Wales was formally welcomed by Phillip IV, brother of the bride-elect. The old King had recently died under circumstances which are worth relating as illustrating the exaggerated stress laid on etiquette at the Court of Spain.

Phillip III was a chilly old gentleman. He encased his lean shanks in padded hose and always had a brazier of charcoal burning beside his chair. One fatal day the brazier was placed too close and caused His Catholic Majesty acute discomfort. Dignity forbade any reference to the temperature of his nether limbs and etiquette prevented his leaving the chair of state for another.

Olivarez, the Prime Minister, noticed his master's distress and asked the Duke of Alva to move the

offending brazier. Alva retorted haughtily that such menial work was the duty of the royal butler. A servant was hastily sent in search of the Duke of Usseda, Butler to the King, but he was nowhere to be found. For an hour messengers scoured the city while Phillip suffered in dignified silence. At long last Usseda hurried in and ordered a servant to remove the brazier. It was too late. The exalted legs of the King of Spain had been so badly burned that erysipelas set in. Phillip died, a martyr to his dignity, and his son ascended the throne.

In such an atmosphere Charles' wooing did not prosper. He hardly saw his intended bride and never in private. He did however climb a balcony and have a confidential talk with Queen Elizabeth, the sister of Louis XIII. In the course of this conversation she told him that the negotiations were sure to fall through. "Why do you not marry my little sister, Henriette?" she asked.

Elizabeth proved herself a true prophet. The question of religion seemed an insuperable obstacle. With bigoted Catholics in Spain and rabid Protestants in England matters were at a deadlock. Finally a few concessions were made on both sides and an amicable agreement seemed to be in sight. Then Buckingham, either with malice aforethought or from pure boredom, upset the apple cart.

Prowling about in search of amorous diversion he met the pretty wife of Olivarez, the Prime Minister, and promptly made an assignation with her. His magnetic personality had swept the lady off her feet but,

on second thought, she decided that discretion was the better part of virtue. Instead of going herself, she sent her maid to keep the tryst. Buckingham discovered the substitution and considered himself insulted. Flying into one of his petulant rages, he picked a quarrel with, of all people, Olivarez himself. The diplomatic calm was shattered. There were high words, sharp demands, spirited refusals, acrid recriminations.

Very soon all hope of a satisfactory settlement of the matrimonial question was lost. In the meantime Buckingham had been instilling a new idea into the romantic head of his Prince. Why not an Anglo-French match? It would be equally satisfactory from a political point of view, more agreeable to his future subjects and very pleasant for himself. Had he not seen the pretty Princess, dancing in the ballet?

Buckingham's motives for this sudden *volte-face* were two-fold. By breaking up the negotiations in Madrid, he could revenge himself for the snub administered by Madame Olivarez and at the same time create opportunities for seeing the lovely Queen of France.

Not content with arousing Charles' interest in the French Princess, Buckingham wrote to England, pointing out the advantages to be gained from an Anglo-French match. James I, weary of combatting the determined hostility of parliament to the Spanish alliance, grasped eagerly at the alternative. While Charles and Buckingham were still in Madrid, English envoys went to Paris to open negotiations. It is at this point that Marie de Chevreuse comes into the picture.

The embassy was headed by Lord Rich, Earl of Holland, a debonair cavalier with a reputation for gallantry. In view of the informal nature of their mission, the envoys could not be entertained at the Louvre. Instead, they became the guests of the Duke de Chevreuse whose friendship with the Prince of Wales made the arrangement most desirable. Holland met his hostess, bowed gallantly over her little hand, smiled into those violet eyes and found himself fathoms deep in love.

Marie, we are told by a contemporary, was "exceedingly good-natured and delighted in loving and being loved." Holland arrived at the psychological moment when she was ready for amorous adventure. Marriage with Chevreuse was already beginning to pall. As a clandestine lover he had been charming. As a husband, to a woman of Marie's calibre, he was disappointing. His gallantry in war did little to excuse his moral cowardice, and his suave charm of manner covered a weak and vacillating character.

Chevreuse had given Marie the protection and prestige of his name in exchange for her fortune. There was little sentiment in their relations, and they treated each other with careless courtesy. The Duke pursued his amorous way with unabated ardor, leaving his wife free to follow his example.

The English envoy's slim grace and irreproachable technique in wooing appealed to Marie's sophisticated tastes and his devotion won her heart. Chateauneuf, one of her adoring slaves, said later that Holland was the first man she had ever really loved and that she would always love him. In a very short time the Duchess yielded to the impassioned appeals of her guest and granted him her favors. Not content with carrying hospitality to such generous lengths, Marie threw herself heart and soul into furthering his cause at Court. In this she found an ally in her husband. While Chevreuse pointed out, in his dilletante fashion, the personal charms of the Prince of Wales, and the political advantages that would accrue from the match, Marie plunged joyously into the troubled waters of intrigue and diplomacy. Although this was her first venture into public affairs and was undertaken solely to help her lover, she exhibited the subtlety and aplomb of a finished politician.

In view of the fact that negotiations at Madrid had not yet been broken off, the first discussions between Holland and the Queen-Mother were necessarily vague. Etiquette demanded that the matter be kept a profound secret but a little calculated indiscretion soon brought it out into the open. Rumors flew about the Court and were freely discussed in spite of the non-committal attitude of Louis and the Queen-Mother. Wherever Holland went, he was surrounded by a bevy of ladies, eagerly exclaiming over the miniature of the Prince of Wales, which he wore about his neck. The sly dog wore only rich black velvet which made a perfect background for the exquisite ivory in its frame of pearls.

Poor Henriette Marie, the most interested party, was forbidden by the Queen-Mother to see the miniature, since no formal proposals had been made. Marie promptly borrowed the picture, smuggled it into the palace

and showed it to Henriette. For an hour the little Princess pored over the likeness of the handsome Charles, while Marie, primed by Holland, described his charms and virtues in glowing terms.

Soon the matrimonial prospect became so openly known that the Spanish Ambassador inquired sarcastically if the Prince of Wales were contemplating bigamy, since he was already contracted to the Spanish Infanta. His reports to Madrid had the desired effect of putting an end to the futile negotiations there. Word now came from England that Holland might make definite proposals for the hand of Henriette Marie, and the battle was on.

Marie found herself aligned against her old enemy, Cardinal Richelieu, and, characteristically, thought more of her lover's cause than of the prestige of her own country. As Madame de Motteville says: "She was interested in the affairs of the world solely in relation to those she loved." Marie was far too feminine to be interested in foreign relations in the abstract. She was fighting for her lover against the prelate whom she hated. Accordingly, Richelieu found himself pitted against an opponent who had accurate knowledge of his weak points. To add to his difficulties, the Duke de Chevreuse was using his influence with the royal family to get favorable terms for his friend, the Prince of Wales. On the other hand, Buckingham was whole-heartedly in favor of the match and in his eagerness, persuaded James to yield many points that might have proved obstacles.

An international marriage contract, in those days, had as many clauses as the Versailles Treaty, and each clause involved a polite wrangle. For the sake of French prestige, Richelieu was bent on winning as many religious concessions as England had been ready to grant to Spain. Holland, on the contrary, had been ordered to uphold the Protestant claims insisted upon by parliament.

Richelieu attempted to get the upper hand from the start by claiming precedence at public functions over the ambassadors, on the ground that he was a Prince of the Church. Holland, representing a Protestant country, took no stock in cardinals and stood firm on his diplomatic status. It was a deadlock, only solved when the wily prelate retired to bed with some imaginary ailment.

Snugly ensconced between the sheets, he received the envoys in his bedroom, where questions of precedence did not apply. Hampered by the activities of Marie de Chevreuse, but aided by the impatient Buckingham, Richelieu concluded the negotiations on terms fairly satisfactory to France. The treaty was signed and May 8, 1625, was set for the date of the wedding.

Both courts celebrated the conclusion of the discussions with enthusiasm and the Louvre was the scene of elaborate entertainments in honor of the English envoys. On one occasion the festivities were marred by the Count de Soissons, who considered himself injured by the match. When he was only five years old, Marie de Medici had arranged a marriage between him and the baby Henriette Marie. With the prospect of a throne for her daughter, she conveniently forgot the previous contract. Soissons

caused quite a scandal by drawing his sword at a formal reception and threatening to cut Holland's throat. He was quelled and forced to retire from Court. Soissons will appear again from time to time in the course of this story, always playing the rôle of a disappointed bridegroom, and always nursing a grievance.

With the signing of the contract, Holland could congratulate himself on having brought his mission to a successful conclusion. To Marie it marked a turning point in her career. For a whole year she had revelled in the delights of illicit love, spiced by intrigue and quickened by the clash of wits. She had been innoculated with the virus of intrigue and was as helpless as a drug-addict. Henceforth life would seem stale and unprofitable unless she could pull political strings, outwit her enemies and help her friends.

Marie de Chevreuse and Richelieu emerged from the diplomatic struggle sworn foes and political opponents. During the actual negotiations, she had remained discreetly in the background, but Richelieu knew only too well the part she had played. He remarked on several occasions that she had given valuable information to the Ambassador and had been responsible for the very favorable terms won by the English party. He saw in her an opponent to be reckoned with and had more than a suspicion that he would have little peace until she was removed from the political arena.

How to do it remained a problem. Even the King, who shared his opinions in the matter, was equally helpless. The Duchess was too firmly entrenched

at Court to be attacked. Richelieu could only wait for his enemy to make a false move. In the meantime he had all her movements carefully watched. Spies surrounded the Queen and reported everything that went on in her intimate circle. Indiscretions there were, in abundance, but nothing that would justify a direct attack on the popular Duchess. Richelieu watched with growing resentment as his gay adversary went from triumph to triumph.

The wedding day was approaching and preparations were pushed on hastily. Then news came that King James had succumbed to one of the various diseases that he had cherished for years. Prince Charming was now King Charles I of England. Under the circumstances, it was impossible for him to come to France in person and it was arranged that he should be married by proxy. To represent him on this important occasion, he appointed his dearest friend and cousin, the Duke of Chevreuse. It was a choice eminently suitable from a diplomatic point of view. Only Richelieu snarled at the honor paid to the husband of the women he detested.

The sun rose on that May morning to find Paris *en fete*. The great façade of Notre Dame was draped with tapestry and cloth of gold. A covered passage had been built from the Archbishop's Palace to the Cathedral, all hung with violent satin figured with golden fleurs-de-lys. In the vast square before the cathedral thousands of citizens waited for the procession and from every window projected eager heads, avid to see every detail of the ceremony. It was late afternoon before the waiting throngs

caught their first glimpse of the stately procession coming from the palace. Eyewitnesses have described the scene and their accounts are peppered freely with enthusiastic adjectives.

First came the Master of Ceremonies and various gentlemen, all gorgeously attired. Then came Chevreuse, attended by Holland and Lord Carlisle, both very splendid. Then Louis who, we are told, "appeared like a bright sun outshining all other stars." He must have appeared like a whole solar system if he hoped to outshine the proxy bridegroom. Chevreuse had a star part and was not going to spoil it by underdressing. He was clad from head to foot in black velvet, banded with diamonds. A diamond aigrette fastened the plumes in his hat, diamond bands encircled the puffed sleeves of his doublet, diamond buckles adorned his high-heeled shoes and diamond garters fastened his silk stockings. The hilt of his rapier sparkled with jewels, and then came the crowning touch: "The representative of Charles I had thrown over his black habit a scarf which dazzled all beholders, being literally covered with diamond roses."

After that blaze of glory, the rest seems tame, but the bride did her best to rival the superior sex. She wore a gown of "cloth of gold and silver, all passamented with the lilies of France and enriched with showers of diamonds and other precious stones." She was escorted by Louis, with her younger brother, Gaston, holding her other hand. After her came the two Queens, Marie de Medici and Anne of Austria. Then came the Princesses of

the Blood Royal, followed by the Duchesses and other noble ladies according to rank. First of the Duchesses walked Marie de Chevreuse, attended by two equerries, with pages carrying her train.

The stately procession paced through the covered galleries to the porch of Notre Dame where the ceremony was performed in the sight of all the people. The contract was signed and the Court passed on into the cathedral where the nuptial mass was sung.

A state dinner closed that momentous day with the nobility of France as the King's guests. At the royal table on the dais were King Louis and Queen Anne, the Queen-Mother, Queen Henriette-Marie of England, the Duke de Chevreuse, representing the King of England, the English envoys—and Marie de Chevreuse. She was the only woman at the table who was not a Queen. There she sat in the royal circle while Princesses of the Blood and the infuriated Richelieu were relegated to less exalted seats. To most women it would have been the topmost pinnacle of success, the ultimate sign of triumph. Marie was bored.

Social success meant nothing to a Rohan who could afford to ignore such trifles. To her, the King was no semi-divine figure. He was merely a stupid oaf who had not wit enough to appreciate his wife and the Queen was a beloved friend whom life had cheated. Even while Marie smiled and talked at that dinner, her agile brain was planning an adventure that was to give Louis years of worry and, to Anne, a few hours of precarious bliss.

Richelieu had been waiting for Marie to make a misstep. Now her foot was at the edge of a precipice. The very day after the dinner she plunged into an intrigue that set two kingdoms by the ears. From then on, she was never out of mischief until sheer old age quenched her enthusiasm and deadened the lure of danger.

CHAPTER V

ONLY Marie's love of mischief, her scorn of the King and her readiness to make the cause of her friends her own can explain or excuse the intrigue in which she now engaged. At that time the love of her generous heart was divided between Anne and Holland. Frankly enjoying "the raptures and roses" of passion, Marie deplored the loveless existence of her Queen. It was true that Anne had many admirers sighing at her feet but they were inadequate. Marie longed to find for her friend the one perfect lover who should be worthy of the prize. What more natural than that Buckingham should occur to her mind? Or what more natural than that Holland should suggest him? The two men were intimate friends and it is extremely probable that Buckingham had confided to Holland his passion for the Queen.

Buckingham had moved heaven and earth to bring about the marriage between Charles and Henriette Marie. Now the time had come for him to make his own appearance on the scene and the way was prepared for him by Marie and Holland. Rochefoucauld, the friend of Marie, sums up the situation in his memoirs: "To do honor to their own passion they planned an adventure of gallantry between the Queen and Buck-

ingham, neither of whom had ever seen the other." Rochefoucauld, of course, did not know of the episode of the rehearsal and it is only of late years that the letter from Charles to his father has come to light. Otherwise his account is correct and is confirmed by Marie herself.

Years later she confided to Madame de Motteville the story of this folly of her youth and the good lady duly repeated it in her memoirs: "She told me that she used to force the Queen's thoughts towards Buckingham by perpetually talking about him and ridding her of the scruples she felt. She found it the most difficult thing in the world to induce her to take some pleasure in the glory of being loved." This last remark may be taken with a grain of salt. Madame de Motteville's memoirs are one long panegyric on the Queen's virtues and excellences. All very loyal and charming, of course, but not always borne out by the facts.

In any case, Marie devoted the week after the wedding to working on the imagination of the somewhat lethargic Anne and succeeded in arousing in her an avid curiosity about this world-famous gallant. Every day Anne's ears were filled with glowing accounts of his magnetic charm and startling beauty. Every day brought him nearer. Buckingham had persuaded the infatuated Charles to send him to Paris to fetch the bride home. It was quite unnecessary, but Buckingham had been working towards this for over a year and was not to be denied. Finally he arrived, in a blaze of glory, and we get the picture from the memoirs of La Porte, the Queen's confidential valet: "The best-built and best-looking man in the

world, he appeared at Court with so much charm and so much splendor that he filled the populace with admiration, the ladies with delight, the gallants with jealousy and the husbands with something worse than that."

No wonder the gallants were jealous and the husbands shivered with apprehensions for their honor. Who could compete with this gorgeous princely creature? While others be-decked themselves with all the colors of the rainbow, he appeared, tall, slim, commanding, clad from head to foot in white velvet, sewn with pearls. Some of the stones, loosely sewn on purpose, rolled about the floor but the magnificent Duke ignored them. When they were picked up, he waved them aside with his winning smile and left the finder in possession of a rare gem.

Buckingham strolled gracefully about, bestowing largesse at every move with a nonchalant magnificence that reduced the recipients to dumb amazement. If they had known it was the crown jewels of England that he was giving away, his prestige might have been lessened. As it was, he was the cynosure of all eyes, the one topic of conversation. He had taken the Court by storm and moved on to the attack of the citadel. He was formally received by Louis and the Queen-Mother, but his meeting with Anne was in the comparative privacy of her own apartments. Rochefoucauld, describing that meeting, says: "The Queen appeared to Buckingham even fairer than his imagination had represented and he seemed to the Queen the man in the world most worthy to be loved."

They met as strangers. Five minutes later they were intimate friends, talking eagerly with every evidence of complete understanding and affection. On the Duke's side was a romantic passion. On the Queen's, ardent curiosity and the thrill of knowing that this ineffable creature had loved her in secret for two long years. It was an inflammable situation and Marie, with her usual contempt for the conventions, fanned the flames. During the week that Buckingham waited in Paris for the bride to complete her preparations, he and Anne were as inseparable as Court etiquette would permit.

Scandal-mongers of the more salacious type state that they met in secret at Marie's house or at the convent to which Anne was in the habit of retiring, but it is extremely unlikely. Anne was under constant surveillance by Richelieu's spies, and there is no evidence of her having kept any illicit trysts. De Tillieres, who was in a position to know, writes in his memoirs: "This passion was perfectly harmless in its effects but its appearances were anything but that."

Anne, one concludes, was getting all the thrill of being wooed without incurring the grave dangers of yielding. She was not particularly passionate but she had a beautiful woman's love of admiration, a neglected wife's desire to play with fire. She went so far as to tell Buckingham that "if it had been possible for any virtuous woman to love any man but her husband, he would have been the only one for whom she could have cared." Cold comfort for an impassioned lover, but it was all he could get. In the meantime, he was with her constantly, holding

her exquisite hands, looking ardently into her dark eyes, watching the pale face flush with emotion at his burning vows. The Court looked on aghast and buzzed with gossip, and de Tillieres wrote: "The Queen's affection was increasing day by day and appearances were growing worse; which enraged the King, her husband, and the Queen, her mother-in-law."

After such a day, Buckingham would return to the Hôtel de Chevreuse, where he was also a guest, and go into conference with his hostess and Holland. Buckingham would rave about the manifold charms of his royal mistress while Holland cheered him with hopes of a happy ending to his romance, and Marie, with her cool clear brain, concocted plans for bringing it about. That week in Paris was merely a preliminary rehearsal, designed to bring Anne to a pliable state of mind. According to Marie's scenario the journey to the coast was to be the setting for the grand finale.

Louis and the Queen-Mother were in a fever to get Buckingham away but the preparations for the journey were by no means trifling. Henriette's household alone consisted of over two hundred persons with their baggage. There were great wains full of her household furniture and trousseau, chests of gold for her dowry, all the paraphernalia without which no self-respecting person of quality would dream of travelling. In addition to all this, the King and Queen-Mother were to accompany her to Boulogne, which involved the transportation of the entire court with their innumerable attendants.

With such a mob overflowing the roads, filling the inns, occupying every inch of accommodation at the halting places, it seemed unlikely Anne and Buckingham would ever find an opportunity for five minutes confidential talk; but it is proverbial that "Journeys end in lovers' meetings." Another proverb, equally apropos, is: "God helps them that help themselves." Fate took a hand in the game and while there is more than a suspicion that a certain intriguing duchess helped fate in its laudable work, there is no proof. It may have been merely the long arm of coincidence.

The fact remains that Louis was smitten with some vague ailment, as he was preparing to accompany his sister, and was obliged to remain at Fontainebleau. The Queen-Mother continued the journey as far as Compiegne. There she, in turn, was laid low with an illness which the physicians diagnosed as a chill. She retired to bed in a convent in the town while the Court found quarters in the larger town of Amiens. The reports of her condition were so alarming that Henriette Marie refused to leave her mother until she recovered. Messengers were sent to King Charles explaining the delay and the Court settled down in Amiens to wait. Henriette and her escort were lodged in the Archbishop's palace, while Anne and her suite occupied a smaller house with a walled garden.

Thus, thanks to the convenient illnesses of both Louis and his mother, another two weeks had been granted to Buckingham and Anne, under the most favorable conditions conceivable. The jealous husband was safe at Fontainebleau, the dragon mother-in-law was bedridden

miles away, and the Queen was isolated from the rest of the court in a discreet little house with walls high enough to insure privacy.

It was an opportunity not to be missed. Daily Buckingham and Holland arrived, ostensibly to visit the Duchess de Chevreuse, their former hostess. Daily the four walked in the garden, with the Queen's suite at a discreet distance, while Buckingham pressed his suit. Marie had created the ideal opportunity for the successful outcome of her pet romance. The time was ripe, the place was perfect, the girl almost won, when Buckingham, by his own reckless folly and lack of finesse, precipitated a disaster. A little more patience would have won the game but it was a quality in which the noble lord was conspicuously lacking. His vanity resented the need of such a long siege, and he found it difficult to imagine any woman resisting his ardor.

One evening, as they were strolling in the garden, Marie and Holland fell behind, leaving the Queen and Buckingham far ahead on the narrow path that wound through the shrubbery. Behind Marie again were the Queen's attendants, de Jars, her equerry, La Porte, her confidential valet, and Putange. As the shadows deepened, Anne and her cavalier were out of sight in the enchanted dusk. Marie and Holland looked at each other with a meaning smile, not untinged with triumph. Their manœuvres had succeeded and the lovers were alone together.

It was a short-lived triumph. Pealing through the scented darkness, shattering the peaceful

night, came a shrill scream that sounded all over the garden. Marie and Holland started to run and were joined by the attendants, stricken with panic at the thought of their Queen in danger. They arrived at the spot to find the Queen sobbing hysterically while Buckingham knelt at her feet, pouring out pleas for forgiveness and protestations of deathless love all in a breath. Anne, still weeping, declared between sobs that all men were brutes. She was hastily led indoors by Marie while Buckingham and Holland tactfully faded away into the landscape.

Much capital was made of the incident by the gossips, but there is no reason to imagine the worst. La Porte, who was on the scene of action two seconds after the scream, saw no evidence that Buckingham had been unduly violent. He says in his memoirs: "Favored by darkness, the Duke permitted himself very insolent liberties and *even went so far as to attempt to caress the Queen.*" The Princess de Conti, that merry forthright dame, assured the King later that "she would answer for the Queen's virtue from the girdle down." As Louis had once remarked loftily that he was not interested in women below the waist, he should have been satisfied.

The Princess, as one of the Queen's intimate circle, was in a position to have first-hand information, and we can imagine the looks exchanged between her and Marie over the Queen's head, as they soothed the hysterical woman and tucked her into bed. Respect for the Queen must have struggled with contempt for the woman who was afraid to make a bid for happiness. Moral issues aside, Anne was a coward and the woman in her was bound by

Hapsburg tradition. She enjoyed being wooed but shrank from being won. She thrilled at the sight of an ardent lover at her feet but rebelled at the feel of possessive arms closing about her royal body. At the first hint that her adorer was getting out of hand, she had been seized by panic and had uttered the fatal scream that brought the whole romantic edifice tumbling about her ears.

In spite of the loyal efforts of the Queen's friends, the news of the *contretemps* leaked out and reached the ears of the Queen-Mother at Compiegne. Infuriated, she peremptorily ordered Henriette to start for the coast at once. Two days later the journey was resumed. Anne, who had remained in strict seclusion, accompanied the little bride, her sister-in-law, for a few leagues, riding in her own coach with the Princess de Conti. Marie and her husband were in the train of the bride.

When they reached the point where Anne must turn back, Buckingham appeared at the door of her coach to say farewell. Choked with emotion, with tears dimming his glowing eyes and blotting the beautiful dark face, he kissed Anne's hand and begged her forgiveness. The large-hearted Princess wept with sympathy but Anne was unmoved. She had been thoroughly frightened and, in the revulsion of feeling, was merciless to the lover whose impetuosity had jarred her out of her placid dignity. Wrapping herself in a mantle of outraged virtue, she ignored the frenzied pleas of the Duke and looked through him with icy, expressionless eyes.

Finally, in despair, the Duke left her and she travelled back to Compiegne to join the Queen-

Mother. There she evidently used more than her usual intelligence and succeeded in convincing the old lady that she had been the innocent victim of a brutal and unprovoked attack. It was just as well for her that she did so. Early one morning the Court was awakened by Buckingham who arrived breathless and wild-eyed after a record ride from the coast. The bridal party had arrived there only to find that storms had delayed the ship from England. It was another heaven-sent respite and the infatuated lover had seized it. Behold him then, in the early dawn, hollow-eyed for lack of sleep, grey with exhaustion, shaken by emotion, but buoyed up by grim determination to see once more the lady of his dreams. He could not leave for England with the memory of those unforgiving eyes burning in his brain and had delayed the royal wedding party in order to reinstate himself in her good graces.

Still covered with the dust of travel he presented himself at the door of the Queen-Mother's sleeping apartment and demanded admittance. He declared that he bore urgent despatches from King Charles and must see her at once. Marie de Medici was not famous for her sweet temper at the best of times. In awakening an irascible convalescent at dawn, Buckingham showed a courage worthy of a better cause. Her annoyance may be imagined when she admitted him, only to be told that the bridegroom wanted to know his bride's favorite dishes in order that they might be served to her on her arrival in England. Perhaps the very imbecility of the excuse, thus produced on the spur of the moment, appealed to

the old dame's sense of humor. Perhaps, dynastic questions to the contrary, all the world loves a lover.

Given the information he asked, Buckingham then announced that he must see Queen Anne for important reasons of State. Marie de Medici, with a wry smile, sent the message to her daughter-in-law.

Anne, awakened by the messenger, was panic-stricken again. She scented a trap and refused absolutely to admit the exigent lover. Marie de Medici sent back word that she should receive him. Anne again refused, while Buckingham stormed and vowed that he would not move a step until he had seen her. Finally the Queen-Mother made her own arrangements, which insured that there should be no unseemly scandal.

When Buckingham was admitted to Anne's bedroom, he found several elderly ladies-in-waiting grouped around the bed where Anne lay regarding him with frightened eyes. Ignoring the embattled chaperones, casting discretion to the winds, he flung himself on his knees beside the bed, seized her cold hand and covered it with kisses. In an ecstasy of adoration, he even kissed the sheets that covered his love and poured out wild broken phrases of hopeless passion. In spite of their horror at such an outrage, the worthy dames were embarrassed by his ardor and Anne, helpless under the battery of eyes, could only murmur non-committal phrases.

Temporarily out of his senses with passion, Buckingham implored her forgiveness for an offence which he particularized, thus giving everyone present

more than a hint of the catastrophe at Amiens. Aghast at his indiscretion, Anne finally granted him the forgiveness he begged and urged him to retire. One of the formidable ladies then tried to raise him from his compromising position and told him frigidly that gentlemen in France were not in the habit of behaving in such a manner. Buckingham retorted wildly that he was not a Frenchman, just a lover who would die unless he could be forgiven. Finally he allowed himself to be led out of the room, leaving Anne in a state of collapse from fright and emotional strain.

Later in the day he was received formally by the Queen-Mother with Anne standing mute at her side, the picture of demure discretion. Marie de Medici gave him messages for her daughter and dismissed him, kindly but very firmly. He never saw Anne again.

It might have been better for all concerned if Anne had yielded to the Duke's embraces. The affair would then have become, in his mind, just one more item in a series of similar episodes. Balked passion fired him with an almost insane determination to overcome all obstacles and made him ignore all other considerations. Buckingham's fiasco in Madrid with Madame Olivarez had caused him to break up the negotiations and wreck an international alliance. His fruitless passion for Anne was to plunge France and England into war and cause untold disasters.

Richelieu was right when he wrote in his diary, speaking of Buckingham: "The wild folly of an enemy is more to be feared than his wisdom, seeing that

the madman does not act on principles which are common to all men."

"The madman" went his way to England leaving Anne to bear the brunt of his idiotic proceedings. She returned to Paris to be greeted by an irate husband who was firmly convinced that she had been unfaithful to him. He was so harsh in his criticisms that even the Queen-Mother intervened on behalf of her daughter-in-law. She pointed out, very reasonably that it would have been impossible for the Queen to do wrong, even if she wanted to, because there were so many people watching her actions. Louis remained unconvinced. The whole Court knew that his wife had walked in a dark garden with this mad Englishman and had screamed in fright. It was common talk that he had grovelled all over her bed and made impassioned love to her before a dozen witnesses. It was inconceivable that these things could have happened without some provocation and Louis was determined to punish those responsible.

From logic, Marie de Medici turned to sentiment and made the incredible statement that "quite a number of incidents of a similar nature had happened to herself in her own youth." If Louis had had any sense of humor, the thought of his stout unlovely mother sighing over the fabulous romances of her past might have been funny. He only grunted and proceeded to vent his spite on the Queen's attendants. Marie de Chevreuse was in England, beyond the reach of his displeasure, but there were humbler people at hand who could be made to suffer. Putange, La Porte, and the Chevalier de Jars were all

ignominiously dismissed, their only crime having been their presence in the garden on the fatal evening.

Anne was thus deprived of the intimate circle on whose absolute loyalty and devotion she had learned to depend. It was a shrewd stroke on the part of Louis and left her desolate and helpless. Later, de Jars and La Porte returned to her service and suffered for their fidelity. Both were destined to feel the dread chill of the Bastille and to face the grim torture chambers. De Jars was to mount the scaffold and feel the edge of the axe on his neck, only to be saved by a miracle. That miracle was the absolute, unswerving, untiring loyalty of Marie de Chevreuse.

Marie meanwhile had arrived in England with the bride and travelled up to London. King Charles had met the ship at Dover and showed himself extremely gracious to his French guests. The Duke de Chevreuse and Marie were installed in Denmark House and given a residence at Richmond to which they could retire from the plague-ridden city. Charles was already fond of his cousin, the Duke, but Marie promptly took his heart by storm. Following the example set by the King, the English court paid so much attention to the lovely Duchess that the bride was almost ignored. Soon the only topic of conversation in polite circles was the Duchess de Chevreuse. Her gaiety, her wit, her gowns, her troops of admirers, her amorous adventures kept tongues wagging to the exclusion of all else. It must be admitted that she gave them plenty of material for gossip.

Holland was already her lover, and, in a well-bred way, flaunted his conquest before the envious eyes of the other gallants. Marie now proceeded to console Buckingham for his recent disappointment. In addition she turned the heads of half a dozen other gallants at Court. Following her lead, the other ladies in the French contingent set a breathless pace and painted the ancient city a startling crimson. The Bishop of Mende, who had come as Henriette's Almoner, watched their behavior with horror and poured out his feelings to his cousin, Richelieu. "Madame de Chevreuse is shut up five or six hours every day with Buckingham," he wrote, "and Holland has made over his prize to him." And later: "I am ashamed of the impudence of Madame de Chevreuse and of her husband's simplicity—ashamed of the fact that he is not ashamed. It seems as if these ladies had come over to establish brothels rather than to serve religion."

There was some reason for this last complaint. According to the terms of the marriage contract, Henriette was allowed to have her own household and her own chapel, where she could worship according to the rites of the Catholic Church. England was officially Protestant but it had been hoped that Henriette's chapel might prove a nucleus from which Catholicism could spread through the land.

Richelieu had reckoned without the Puritan party which was daily becoming stronger. The Puritans had opposed the French marriage on religious

grounds and were bent on proving that they had been right. In this they were greatly helped by the tactless blunders made by Henriette and her household, which did much to antagonize the English. Charles had hoped to build the royal chapel and thus fulfil the terms of the contract without difficulty, but he found himself involved in a storm of vicious controversy.

Indifferent to the religious squabbles, Marie danced and flirted, loved and laughed. London gossiped, and the Puritans pointed long bony fingers and talked about the Scarlet Woman. It must be admitted that the morals of the lady were hardly an advertisement for the Catholic Church of which she was, presumably, a member. Between her cheerful godlessness and the pig-headed unreasonableness of Henriette's household, all hopes of "converting" England went a-glimmering and Richelieu raged at the outcome of his plans.

He informed the King of the state of affairs in England, as described in the letters of the good Bishop of Mende. Louis promptly ordered Marie to return to France at once. King Charles, greatly taken by this fascinating creature, refused to let her go. He wrote that the Duchess was in no condition to stand the fatigues and dangers of the journey, and he insisted on keeping her in England until after an event which was imminent.

Marie's condition, in fact, was extremely interesting, although it did not seem to hamper her in any way. The flowing generous costume of the day was discretion itself and not even the daily expectation of maternity could dim her magnificent vitality. Between horror and

helpless giggles, polite London learned that there was some rivalry between Holland and Buckingham. Each was begging her to make use of his house for the event. Opinion, on the whole, was on the side of Holland who appeared to have the prior claim. He was even thought to have the best possible reason for wanting the child to be born under his roof. The Bishop of Mende tore his hair at this new scandal and even Charles looked dubious. Finally Marie retired to the royal palace at Hampton Court and there, in June, gave birth to her daughter, Anne Marie de Lorraine.

The King and Queen moved out to Hampton Court to escape the heat and plague in London and the Court continued its gay round. Buckingham, dripping with pearls, graced the christening ceremony, while Sir Robert Carr, Master of the Privy Purse, wrote gloomily in his diary: "There is not enough money to pay for Madame de Chevreuse's nurse and midwife." The country was bankrupt, the army and navy almost non-existent, the Puritans were growling and disaster was in the air, but the Court danced merrily on. Within a few weeks after the birth of her daughter, Marie swam across the Thames and set the tongues wagging as busily as ever. Poetasters wrote verses about the cold waters of the river being set afire by the warmth of her lovely person; the wags dubbed her the "female Leander" and the Puritans made scathing remarks about "French tricks."

As each new escapade set the town in a roar, the Bishop of Mende wrote desperately to Richelieu, who, in turn, retailed all the gossip to Louis. The com-

mands to return to France became more peremptory but still Marie lingered from week to week. She had a definite scheme in her mind and was hard at work on it, behind the smoke-screen of mere frivolous gaiety. She and Buckingham were indeed "closeted together" for hours each day but the time was not all spent in amorous dalliance. She had set her heart on furthering the romance between the Duke and Queen Anne and refused to entertain the thought of defeat. Since Anne could not leave France, it was obvious that Buckingham should go to her. How to get him there was the problem.

The religious squabbles in the royal household seemed likely to provide the needed opportunity. Henriette was only sixteen, spoiled and petulant, with all her mother's inability to see two sides of a question. She insisted on having her own chapel at once and defeated all poor Charles' efforts to manage it unobtrusively, without offending the susceptibilities of his Puritan subjects. They quarrelled incessantly and Henriette was backed up in all her querulous demands by her French household. Letters went flying back and forth across the Channel and the affair quickly developed into a first-class international family row. Henriette scolded and pouted; Charles dug in his heels and sulked; Marie de Medici behaved like the mother-in-law of the comic strips; Richelieu became dignified; Louis muttered darkly, without supplying any constructive ideas; Buckingham quarrelled with Henriette. Marie de Chevreuse, her eyes dancing with mischief, sympathized with everybody in turn, but subtly stirred the pot and kept it on the boil.

In this affair she showed again her diabolical genius for playing on the weaknesses and emotions of her puppets. Henriette's petulance, Charles' feeble obstinacy, the Queen-Mother's tendency to meddle and her readiness to fly blindly to the defence of her favorite daughter—all were called into play. They would have achieved the desired result if Richelieu had not been so well-informed. At every decisive point in the long duel between them, Marie found herself outclassed because the Cardinal had early, accurate information. This was a case in point.

The Bishop of Mende, while tearing his hair over the unseemly scandals in London, was watching the situation and analyzing the motives behind it all. "The Earl of Pembroke tells me," he wrote, "that it has been settled between Madame de Chevreuse and the gallants (Holland and Buckingham) that twice every year they would cross the water under pretext of settling difficulties between the King and Queen of England, and that the Queen-Mother, in fear that her daughter was badly treated, would obtain this freedom for them."

It was Marie's plan in a nut-shell and would have succeeded had it not been for the Cardinal's intelligence service. When Richelieu had shown Louis the Bishop's letter and explained the plot to him, he put his foot down. Under no conditions, he announced, would he allow Buckingham to set foot in France again. If Henriette were not happy in her marriage, she must make the best of it. In the meantime, the Duke and Duchess de

Chevreuse were commanded to return to France in terms which allowed no further cavil.

It was check, for the moment, but by no means checkmate. Since one plan had failed, Marie prepared to make another. It never occurred to her to give up hope. Anne and Buckingham loved each other and therefore must be brought together, though kingdoms tottered. Far too shrewd and intelligent to waste time bemoaning a lost cause, Marie turned without a moment's delay to retrieving the disaster. Since England had failed her, the work must be done in France.

July found Marie and the Duke de Chevreuse back again at the French Court with the little Anne Marie de Lorraine. Marie, cool, amused, her slim and lovely self again, received without embarrassment the congratulations of the Court on her English triumphs. Louis, of course, scowled and grumbled but the antics of the surly oaf had never impressed her. Richelieu greeted her with his thin-lipped smile and ironic comments. He had made some caustic puns about her affair with Buckingham, turning on the fact the "une chevre" is a she-goat. Marie, when she heard of it, laughed but chalked up another mark against the "scarlet pest" of a Cardinal.

It must have been some satisfaction to her feelings when letters arrived from King Charles singing her praises enthusiastically. The dazzled monarch wrote to Chevreuse: "Our dear cousin (Marie) carries back with her the satisfaction that we lose by her return, and with it the honor, the respect and the prayers and good wishes of all sorts, not only of our Court but of all other persons

who have had the honor of seeing her or hearing others speak of her." We may imagine the wry smile of Richelieu, who was not without a sense of humor, when he read this tribute. From what he had been able to gather, the good citizens of London had done little, for the past two months, but "hear others speak of her" and it is doubtful if either honor or respect were the immediate reaction. Perhaps a few more tolerant Puritans prayed for her lost soul, in the intervals of damning her wholeheartedly.

The letter from Charles to Louis was even more complimentary, although his incredibly involved literary style makes it difficult to follow. He thanks Louis enthusiastically for sending her to England, speaks of her "charms and perfections," feels "in duty bound to express all the gratitude in Our power for so singular a favor and also for the wisdom with which you made your choice of a person in whom We found so many causes of content and satisfaction." "I beg of you," he continues, "to show me the kindness of assisting me to render her the honor and thanks I owe her for the great honor and felicity We have received through her, who now returns to you, fitted to be the ornament of any palace and the very worthy pledge of our mutual affection."

What a tribute! There is something a little pathetic in the picture of Charles tying himself in epistolary knots in his endeavor to express his admiration for Marie. Unknown to him, she had done much to ruin his domestic peace. She was soon to involve him in war with France and ultimately helped to bring his throne

tumbling about his ears. That letter may have been written in the very room from which he was later led out to execution.

The miserable squabbles that had marred his honeymoon dragged on interminably. Feeling that Henriette's French attendants were largely to blame for her obstinate attitude, Charles turned them all out of the palace and shut them up in a mansion outside London. They retaliated by taking with them the Queen's entire wardrobe, leaving her without even a change of underclothing. Charles was obliged to send a gentleman-in-waiting to demand Her Majesty's clothes. Some of them were recovered but her jewels vanished.

Finally, in desperation, Charles sent a troop of soldiers to evict the trouble-makers and had them all loaded on board a ship for France. They departed in high dudgeon, leaving a mountain of unpaid bills for Charles to meet. Back in France with their plunder they broadcast their grievances and horrified the Court with tales of the English King's cruelty to his wife.

Ultimately, Charles and Henriette fell in love with each other, and their romance is one of the most tragically beautiful stories in history. It took ten years, however, for matters to adjust themselves. In the meantime, Marie de Chevreuse had lost all interest in the young couple's affairs. She had only helped the quarrel in order to bring Buckingham to France. Since that had failed, she set herself to gain her end in some other way.

In an attempt to bring Anne and Buckingham together, she had used a King and Queen. Baffled

in this manœuvre, she fell back on castles and knights. Europe was her chess board and crowned heads her pawns. Her new plan was to involve war, armed rebellion and an attempt to overthrow the dynasty. Thousands of lives were to be lost and the safety of the realm imperilled, all to bring a lover to his lady's arms. Truly, there is no accounting for the vagaries of the feminine mind.

CHAPTER VI

FOR a few months after Marie's return to France she remained inactive, apparently happily absorbed in the aimless diversions of the Court. She flirted and gossiped, hunted and danced with her usual abandon and gave no hint that there was any thought in her golden head beyond the amusement of the moment. Actually, her fine clear brain was working at top speed and she was busy spinning the web of the great intrigue which was to shake the kingdom.

She studied the King with shrewd appraising eyes and mentally dismissed him as negligible. His miserable health indicated that his tenure of office would be short and his feeble personality reduced him to the level of a nonentity. Grown more dignified with the passing years, Louis took his royal duties very seriously and attended conscientiously to affairs of state, but he remained a puppet. The brain that guided, the hand that pulled the strings, the will that drove him forward were Richelieu's.

Inscrutable, indomitable, the great Cardinal stood out head and shoulders above the crowd in mental stature. Like a hooded eagle, he watched his prey and bided his time. Like a thunderbolt he struck when the time was ripe. The thin, secretive lips, the masterful

nose with its delicately chiselled nostrils, the sweeping intellectual brow, stamped him for a born master of men. The pallor induced by racking headaches, sleeplessness and poor health, showed the physical weakness only overcome by his indomitable will. With his driving energy, his subtle brain and fragile body, he was "keen and flexible, like a sword that wears out its sheath."

When the tall masterful figure swept into a room, men bowed in respect but drew back in fear. Richelieu walked alone, friendless among his enemies; but behind him, like a shadow, came the "grey Cardinal." This was Father Joseph du Tremblay, his secretary and *alter ego*. He alone could follow the devious paths of Richelieu's diplomacy; he alone had the trust and love of his master. They were a curious pair: Richelieu, slim, tall, gorgeous in his regal scarlet; Father Joseph, burly, thickset, padding about on sandalled feet with his coarse grey robe girdled by a rope. Two sharp eyes gleamed from under his cowl and his face was lost in a huge bushy beard which defied the efforts of any barber in the kingdom.

No one knew definitely how much those sharp eyes saw. Men feared the worst and shivered when they saw the grey Cardinal enter Richelieu's private room. It is true that many whispered conferences were held there which decided the fate of men or kingdoms. But on other occasions those blunt fingers would be tender with healing and the rumbly, gruff voice would say *"Soyez tranquil, mon fils,"* as the monk soothed the tortured nerves of his master.

To Marie de Chevreuse, Richelieu loomed up as the enemy who must be destroyed if her plans were to succeed. He was the enemy of Anne and the great obstacle in the way of her happiness. Since he was too strong to tackle single-handed, she must find allies.

During those months of inaction, Marie was studying people, watching their reactions, weighing their possibilities, mentally assigning them to the parts they were to play in the great game. Most often her eyes rested thoughtfully on Gaston, the younger brother of the King.

Monsieur, to give Gaston his official courtesy title, was at this time about twenty, and the darling of his mother's heart. He was a handsome stripling with great charm of manner and quite a reputation for gallantry. Women, attracted by his good looks, shrank from his sarcastic tongue. Men, worthy of the name, turned in disgust from his foul-mindedness. Although he was the heir-apparent to the throne, he was completely indifferent to affairs of state. He lounged about all day, his hat on the side of his head, his hands in his pockets, eternally whistling the latest ribald song of the streets. At night he would slip out of the Louvre to find amusement among his spiritual affinities in the squalid purlieus of Paris. Having no mental resources, he depended for amusement upon the group of undesirables about him and was possessed of such a demon of restlessness that he could not even stand still long enough to be dressed. His valets would follow him about the room, throwing his clothes on, helter-skelter, as they could catch him. His modern

prototype loafs about in pool-rooms all day, sniggering over smutty jokes. Lacking such congenial occupation, Gaston sauntered about the Louvre with his attendants, reducing every decent woman to agonies of embarrassment by his coarse wit and basking in the smiles of his doting mother. De Retz, who later plays a large part in this chronicle, summed Gaston up in one of his trenchant thumb-nail sketches: "His manners were incredibly easy and he possessed everything necessary to the making of a man except courage. He plotted because he had not the strength to resist persons who dragged him into their intrigues and then betrayed them because he had not the courage to support them."

As a man, Gaston was a chicken-livered weakling and beneath contempt. As heir-apparent to the throne, he was the ace of trumps and, properly played, would win the game. In the meantime, Marie was collecting the rest of her cards.

The natural enemies of Richelieu were to be found among her own class, nobles who resented his growing prestige and were jealous of his influence over the King. The Duke de Nevers, the Duke de Longueville and others were quite ready to join a conspiracy against him.

The Duke de Condé, First Prince of the Blood Royal, had two passions, money and his dignity. The overthrow of Richelieu would open the way to greater opportunities for himself, all of which might be made to yield a profit. He had personal slights to avenge as well. Condé, for all his grandeur, was invincibly opposed to

washing himself, and dressed in clothes that would shame an Armenian peddler. Richelieu had wounded him in all his tenderest places by ordering him to clean himself before appearing at Court.

The Duke de Vendôme and his brother, the Cardinal-Prince, were the sons of Henry IV by Gabrielle d'Estrées and had inherited their royal father's energy and aggressive spirit. They cherished a wholehearted contempt for the dismal weakling who sat on the throne and were heard to declare, under the influence of some good wine, that "Bastards rule as well as those born in wedlock." Any upheaval which would shake the reigning dynasty was, in their estimation, a step in the right direction, and would afford opportunities for resolute men with the blood of the hero of Ivry in their veins. They too fell in line.

Then came the Count de Soissons, whom we last saw nursing a grievance because Henriette was to marry King Charles. Surly, turbulent, self-centred, Soissons now wanted to marry the heiress of the Montpensier family and was furious because he could not get the royal consent. He hated Richelieu and Louis on general principles and was quite prepared to take part in any scheme which would annoy them.

Last of all came Marie's relative, the Duke de Rohan, now the official leader of the Huguenots. Under the influence of Marie de Medici, Louis had taken from his Protestant subjects many of the privileges granted to them by his father. As a result the Huguenot party as a whole was only too ready to take advantage of any unrest

to fight for religious freedom. The Duke de Rohan, warned of possible disturbances, held himself ready to seize his opportunity.

Marie went about her work with consummate skill. A subtle question here, a sly hint dropped there, a casual remark that fanned a smouldering grievance into flame, a whispered confidence that gave hope of a better day when the nobles should come into their own. Half the great houses of France were involved but the secret was well kept and Richelieu's cold grey eyes, watching from under the hooded lids, saw nothing. The work was done underground while, on the surface, his enemies moved about the Court, casual and elegant, giving no sign.

They were waiting for the psychological moment to strike when the signal was given by an announcement that a marriage was to be arranged between Gaston and Mademoiselle de Montpensier. It was a shock to the Court since it had been assumed that Gaston would marry some foreign princess. In arranging the match, however, the Queen-Mother and Richelieu showed real intelligence. The lady had an income estimated at half a million francs a year, an incredible sum for those days. Her estates comprised large areas of France and would, in the hands of a noble, constitute a danger. Secured to the throne, they would give added stability. Mademoiselle de Montpensier was said to be personally attractive and Gaston was delighted with the proposed match.

To Marie the scheme sounded the deathknell of her plans. The destruction of Richelieu and the overthrow of Louis were useless unless she could thereby

secure the happiness of the Queen. To Anne, a member of the proud house of Hapsburg with the blood of generations of kings in her veins, the thought of retiring from the scene as a mere childless widow was insupportable. Behind the plan to overthrow the great Cardinal was another, jealously guarded from the conspirators. This was to remove Louis, either by death or abdication, and put Gaston on the throne with Anne as his queen. At all costs this marriage must be prevented, and the time was short.

Marie cast about to find someone whose influence over Gaston would counteract that of his mother. With her unerring ability to pick the right tool for her work, she chose the Marshal d'Ornano, who had been Gaston's tutor and governor for many years. The old gentleman was ill in bed at the time and found himself, to his intense gratification, the object of the most solicitous attention from some of the ladies of the Court. Both the jolly Princess de Conti and Mademoiselle de Verneuil visited him and brought him delicacies. Last and best of all came the ravishing Duchess de Chevreuse. Marie had called in her two faithful allies to prepare the way. Now she came to deliver the *coup de grace* herself. The old Marshal, who was incredibly ugly, was not used to such attention and fell an easy victim. By methods best known to herself Marie won his aged heart and made him her devoted slave. Then she put him to work.

Gaston, delighted with his approaching betrothal, was astonished to find that his old tutor did not think much of it. When pressed, the Marshal admitted that he was sorry to see his pupil fobbed off with

a mere commoner, when a greater destiny awaited him. Gaston was interested, excited by the hint of mystery. D'Ornano discreetly pointed out that Louis, with his feeble constitution, could hardly live long. Gaston would then succeed him and have his choice of all the eligible brides in Europe. Why throw himself away on a mere Duke's daughter when the dark-eyed daughter of the King of Spain would be a widow?

Gaston caught the idea and wondered how he could have been so blind as not to see it for himself. He had an eye for a pretty woman and was already quite aware of the charms of his sister-in-law. The prospect of being her husband was distinctly alluring and was well worth waiting for.

Swelling with dreams of grandeur, seeing himself, in imagination, already King of France with Anne by his side, Gaston threw all Richelieu's plans into disorder by loftily refusing to marry the Montpensier heiress. Marie de Medici screamed and scolded, Richelieu questioned shrewdly, but all to no purpose. Gaston merely persisted in his refusal without giving any reason. He could hardly explain that he was waiting for his brother to die so that he could marry his widow.

D'Ornano had done his work well and the marriage was delayed. Now, while Gaston marked time, Marie swiftly drew together the threads of her weaving. The nobles were ready with their armies, and Soissons had offered to finance the scheme to the extent of 40,000 crowns on condition that Gaston refused the match. With this money, Spanish mercenaries were hired

and were waiting on the border for the signal. Savoy, on whom Richelieu had recently inflicted a crushing defeat, was prepared to send an army to attack in the South, and there were restless Huguenots in the North, spoiling for a fight.

During all this time Marie had been in close touch with England, sending and receiving messages by an Englishman called Montagu. He was a dark, clean-cut, immaculate young gentleman, self-contained and rigidly conventional. His reserve and conventionality lasted for fully five minutes after his first meeting with Marie de Chevreuse. Then they were laid, a humble love-offering, at her little feet.

It had been planned that an English fleet, under Buckingham, should attack the coast simultaneously with the risings all over France. Charles rather shrank from such an unprovoked act of war, but Buckingham's influence over him was so strong that he gave his reluctant consent. The usual Stuart poverty caused some delay. Charles, having allowed Buckingham to help himself lavishly from the royal funds, found himself unable to outfit a fleet and he was doubtful of getting a grant from Parliament.

With armies on each frontier and the fuse laid all over France, Buckingham was holding up the whole scheme, for he insisted on having a share in it himself. Finally he wrecked it by his indiscretion. Marie had organized half of France, Savoy and Spain without allowing the secret to get out. Buckingham and Holland between them took the whole English Court into their

confidence and the rumor finally reached the ever-open ears of the Bishop of Mende. Immediately he wrote to his cousin and patron, Cardinal Richelieu: "The King of England is expecting great results from the understanding between Monsieur (Gaston) and the Queen of France, and nearly the whole Court is conspiring in this scheme."

Richelieu had scented trouble in the air. This letter gave him all the definite information he needed. As usual, the excellence of his espionage system was only equalled by the imbecile indiscretion of his enemies. Daily sheaves of reports from hundreds of spies were laid before him, part of the intelligence service that covered France and adjacent countries. Daily he skimmed them and filed away the salient facts in his marvellous brain. He already knew of the troops on the frontiers, of the tenant armies in the provinces, of Vendôme's remarks about bastards ruling as well as legitimate children, of Gaston's refusal to marry Mademoiselle de Montpensier and of his recent intimacy with his former tutor. Now, with the letter from the Bishop of Mende, the scattered parts of the puzzle fell into place and Richelieu saw the whole scheme.

Unerringly he put his finger on the vital spot. Armies might threaten at the borders, but the immediate danger was at home, right at hand. Without a word of warning, he struck, and d'Ornano, arrested in bed, was thrown into prison. It was a shrewd stroke and staggered the conspirators. They leaped to the conclusion that the deadly Cardinal knew all their plans and they waited nervously for the next blow. Gaston, in uncontrollable panic, threw up the sponge and offered to marry

the heiress. Only Marie kept her head. She found out that d'Ornano had not betrayed any of his friends and assured her fellow-conspirators that, in any case, he knew very little. Decisive action could still save the situation, if only Gaston could be kept in line.

Rallied by her gay confidence, the Vendôme brothers agreed to be responsible for the "decisive action," which was the assassination of Richelieu. She, for her part, undertook the more difficult task of stiffening Gaston's weak resolution and preventing the marriage. Once again she looked about for the tool to use, and it is at this point that the ill-starred Chalais comes into the picture.

Henri de Talleyrand, Count de Chalais, was of good family and had been one of the "children-of-honor" in attendance on the royal infants. When Louis came to the throne he made his former playmate Master of the Wardrobe, a position which put him on terms of intimacy with the King.

In many ways, Chalais was the ideal man for Marie's purpose. Since he was in the King's confidence, he had excellent opportunities of knowing what was going on, and his friendship with Gaston was of vital importance. On the other hand, he was young and possibly indiscreet. Marie could only hope for the best, and there was no time to be lost.

Her first step was the subjugation of Chalais. The youth had already shown signs of being enamored of the lovely Duchess, and had amused the Court by following her about and gazing at her with

adoring eyes. Intent on her schemes, she had hardly noticed the twenty-year-old lad, but now she turned those gorgeous eyes full on him and smiled. Dizzy with rapture, he was at her feet, her slave to command. He, too, was put to work.

Night after night he would steal up to Gaston's room in his dressing-gown and the two would spend hours talking. Gaston wavered, Chalais urged, argued, persuaded, promised, did everything in his power to bolster up the weak will and fire the febrile imagination of the Prince.

Richelieu was now on the alert and his eyes were everywhere. He discovered this sudden intimacy between Gaston and the Master of the Wardrobe and drew his own conclusions. A shrewd judge of character, he knew that, in Chalais' heart, love and ambition strove for mastery. Deftly he set himself to play on the youth's cupidity and did it to such good purpose that Chalais offered "to get the match accepted if he were offered something good." Richelieu evidently offered something superlatively good because Chalais was even better than his word. He not only switched the feeble-minded Gaston completely around in favor of the match, but he also warned Richelieu of the Vendômes' plot to assassinate him.

When the warning reached him, Richelieu was at Fleury. Close on the heels of Chalais' messenger came a party of the conspirators who were an advance guard for the Vendômes. He greeted them cordially and offered them refreshment. While they were still eating, he stepped into his coach and drove away at top speed. Early

in the morning Gaston was awakened by the appearance in his bedroom of his redoubtable foe. "You should arise earlier when you are hunting, Monsieur," said the Cardinal blandly. "The bird has escaped from the snare." Then he continued his journey to Versailles where he joined the King.

His vengeance was swift and sure, and this time the Vendôme brothers felt his heavy hand. Invited to visit the King, they were arrested and put in prison. At the same time the King sent for Mlle. de Montpensier to come to Paris so that the marriage might take place at once.

The double warning was calculated to frighten the bravest conspirator, but the intrepid Marie only counter-attacked. Once again those devastating eyes were turned on Chalais, and a few shrewd questions discovered the secret of his treachery. Rochefoucauld writes: "In the midst of the affair, and despite all his pledges, Monsieur de Chalais became reconciled to Richelieu, but Madame de Chevreuse reproached him so bitterly and urged him so strongly that—nothing being impossible to a woman of so much beauty and wit—he was unable to resist her."

Some writers say that Chalais was to prick the King with a poisoned pin while adjusting his ruff; others say that Louis was to be shut up in a monastery until he abdicated or until the confinement ruined his feeble constitution. There is no way of ascertaining the truth. We do know for certain that Chalais set to work on Gaston

with the result that in a few days the spineless fool was again refusing to marry his heiress. He should have been called Reuben—"unstable as water."

Since Mlle. de Montpensier was coming to Paris, it was essential that Gaston should go elsewhere. Marie had arranged that he should flee with Chalais, but Gaston delayed interminably and at the last moment refused to start until he had had his dinner. That dinner, in all probability, cost him a crown. Again the Cardinal struck, and this time the victim was poor, foolish Chalais.

D'Ornano had been arrested in May, the Vendômes in June. It was July 8 when the ominous gates of the prison at Nantes clanged shut on the twenty-year old pawn who had tried to cry "check" to the Red Bishop.

Chalais' first thought was to yell for help. He wrote dozens of letters to Marie, protesting his devotion and asking her assistance. "It is not at this hour," he wrote, "that I first recognize the divinity of your beauty but I have now begun to learn that you must be served like a goddess, since I am not permitted to prove my love without running the risk of my life. Take care of it, then, since it is utterly dedicated to you and, if you judge it worthy, preserve it."

Another letter indicates that she had accepted his devotion without succumbing to his wooing: "Since my life depends on you, I fear not to hazard it for you, to make you understand that I love you. Accept then, this testimony and do not condemn my temerity. If those beautiful eyes that I adore regard this letter with favor, it

augurs well for my fortune; and if the contrary happens, I no longer desire my liberty because in it I shall find my punishment." These letters were smuggled out of the prison by Chalais' servant, whose sister delivered them to Marie. She sent back verbal messages, which were relayed through the servant: "Madame told me that she does not send you any reply and that her life and liberty depend upon it. She will serve you without writing and kisses your hands a hundred thousand times."

Chalais, immured in a cell far underground, cut off from all communication with his friends, drew little consolation from these messages and could not understand why his mistress never wrote to him. Finally he began to suspect that she had brought him to this awful place and then callously left him to his fate. Marie, who never would nor could desert a friend, was straining every nerve in his behalf, but the darkness and loneliness preyed on Chalais until he lost hope and turned for help to the Cardinal. He felt, quite rightly, that Richelieu was under an obligation to him for his warning of the plot at Fleury and tried to ingratiate himself with his former master. "I dare swear," he wrote, "that you will find yourself in great need of a very zealous, affectionate and tolerably watchful man such as, your lordship, your humble servant." Getting no answer, he wrote to the King himself: "May it please you to remember that I only belonged to the faction thirteen days Permit me, Sire, to appeal to Your Majesty with tears in my eyes, and as the most repentant of men, to grant me pardon out of your extreme goodness."

Whether it was the poisoned pin or the faulty arithmetic that hardened Louis' heart, he vouchsafed no response to the appeal of his former playmate.

The silence, the loneliness, the ignorance of his fate sapped all Chalais' courage and finally drove him mad. He beat his handsome head against the cruel stone walls; he wept and raved and blasphemed. Last of all, he screamed that he was only a tool and that he had been used by others to gain their own ends. Richelieu, who was no mean psychologist, had only been waiting for that. Chalais was brought up from his cell and questioned. He was told that his friends had deserted him and that Madame de Chevreuse already had another lover. By skilful questions and insinuations, he was trapped into all sorts of admissions and finally mentioned names that gave Richelieu the information he wanted.

Marie, having tried every other way without avail, finally humbled herself and went to the Cardinal to beg for the life of her humble adorer. He greeted her with a thin-lipped smile of triumph and handed her Chalais' confession, in which he had revenged himself for the apparent desertion of his mistress.

". . . She told me that if I gave myself over to her utterly she would scorn the rest of the world. I failed in judgment but I swear before God that, though I was aware of the faction, I never was its counsellor. . . . It is very difficult not to be deceived by such devilish artifices, for who could escape a Princess so kindly looked on at the Courts of two of the greatest Queens in the world,

whose manners are so easy and her rouge so well laid on. . . ."

We may imagine Richelieu's subtle smile as he waited for her to reach, in her reading, that last waspish little sting about the rouge. The reaction was what one might expect. Marie had humbled herself to save a brainless young weakling, only to find that he had betrayed her. She was loyal comrade enough to scorn treachery and enough of a natural woman to resent catty remarks about her make-up. Her comments while short, were pungent, and Richelieu carefully retailed them to his prisoner.

Again his psychology was sound. Chalais wrote to him: "Since you have done me the honor to tell me that she has slandered me, I no longer have any object but that of saving myself." He retaliated for the supposed "slander" by making even more disastrous revelations, implicating Marie, the Queen, Gaston and all the plotters. When Richelieu had wrung the lad dry of all he knew, he appointed a special commission to try him on August 5.

On the following day Gaston was married unprotestingly to Mlle. de Montpensier, the Cardinal himself officiating.

Apparently the removal from his cell to the council chamber restored Chalais to his normal sanity and his comment on the marriage was not without an admirably dry humor: "They have caught Monsieur on the hop. May the Devil take me if there was ever a man so bold in the management of State affairs as the Lord Cardinal."

With the return of sanity came courage, and Chalais on trial for his life behaved in a way worthy of his good blood. He absolutely repudiated his confession, denied that any of the persons mentioned were guilty and paid a public tribute to the charm, virtue and innocence of Madame de Chevreuse. It was a fine gesture and seriously hampered Richelieu, who had counted on a public accusation against the conspirators. Chalais, however, had hopelessly incriminated himself and the death penalty was a foregone conclusion.

The sentence as pronounced by the Court condemned him to torture first, in order that he might betray his associates, but this was remitted by the King at the entreaties of the lad's mother.

Richelieu did, however, make one last attempt to obtain the necessary evidence. The officers who came to Chalais to announce his sentence made every effort to induce him to sign a confession but without success. "The last deposition I made," he said, "is entirely false in that which concerns a certain lady. What I said was for the purpose of saving my life." The officer pointed out that he himself had seen him writing the incriminating letters to Richelieu, but still Chalais refused to be trapped: "What I have written, I wrote in the extremity of rage and by reason of an erroneous belief which I entertained that she had deserted me."

Far from desertion, Marie had not yet given up hope and made one last desperate effort to gain time. The executioners of Nantes and of all the surrounding towns were heavily bribed to disappear and to take

their weapons with them. On the day of execution, no headsman could be found. It was natural to count on delay until an official executioner could be brought from elsewhere, but two convicts were found in the prison who agreed to act as substitutes in exchange for free pardons. Then the axe was missing but a heavy sword was hastily brought.

The friends of the condemned man meant well, but the result of their intervention was unmitigated horror. The proxy executioner overestimated either his skill or his courage, but he made up by persistence for what he lacked in strength. One blow should have been sufficient to sever the gallant head, but after twenty attempts, Chalais was still writhing, moaning, gasping prayers. Finding the sword inadequate, the executioner fell back on a carpenter's adze, and it took thirty-six hacks to put the tortured lad out of his agony.

There was a logical motive for the disastrous attempt to delay the execution. Gaston could not avoid the marriage but he was in a position to dictate terms and could easily have asked for the life of his old playfellow. Richelieu and the Queen-Mother were so set on the match that they would have granted his request. The miserable weakling, however, had only one idea—to save his own skin. He made a full statement of his part in the plot and betrayed all his associates. Among other revelations, he told the King and Richelieu that Anne had repeatedly entreated him to refuse the marriage. He also said that Madame de Chevreuse, two years before, had advised

him to remain unmarried, promising that, in the event of the King's death, he could marry the Queen.

Chalais was undoubtedly guilty of treason, and so deserved to die, but he was made the scape-goat for all. D'Ornano died of fever in his prison before he could be brought to trial. This was another blow to Richelieu who thus lost his last chance of obtaining corroborative evidence against the other conspirators. He admitted that he was "infinitely vexed" and wrote to the King: "The justice of God wished to anticipate yours." The Vendômes only suffered a short imprisonment while Gaston gained a wealthy bride and was given the appanage of Chartres as an additional inducement to loyalty.

The other nobles escaped unscathed, to Richelieu's unconcealed annoyance. He wrote in his diary: "One cannot uproot them all, for many of them are of such high nobility that one cannot think of punishing them. They continually inflame the relatives of those whom one chastises and the women will not give over their madness."

Even Marie could not be brought to trial in the absence of direct evidence. The Duke de Chevreuse, although related to the royal family of France, was a member of the independent House of Lorraine, and as such, was not officially a French subject. Undue severity to Marie would antagonize both Lorraine and the English Court, not to mention half the noble houses of France. Richelieu knew whom to thank for the whole conspiracy, and wrote in his memoirs: "She has done more harm than any other person," but the only punishment he could inflict was banishment.

Marie, who had retired to Dampierre, received formal orders to go to the Chateau du Verger, which belonged to her brother. She was to consider herself a prisoner there until further orders. At this the Duchess flew into a royal rage. "Did they think," she demanded, "that she was only equal to flirtations. She would show them, etc." She informed everyone within earshot that the King was an incapable idiot, who took orders from "that buffoon of a Cardinal" and that she would have every Frenchman in England treated as she was being treated in France.

In the Queen's apartments, too, there was weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. Anne, who could not bear the thought of being deprived of her loyal friend and supporter, protested vigorously, but neither tears nor tantrums moved Richelieu from his resolution. Marie was to go to her dismal retirement and Chevreuse was ordered to expedite the process. He was on his way to Dampierre when he received his instructions and was "extremely distressed" but apparently made no effort to save her.

"I shall be at Dampierre to-morrow morning," he wrote to the King, "to give orders for the departure of my wife with all the obedience I owe to Your Majesty's commands."

When he reached Dampierre, the dutiful husband found that Marie had not waited for him to give any orders. She had slipped away in the darkness, evaded the watchers and was soon safely over the borders of Lorraine.

CHAPTER VII

RICHELIEU may well have groaned when he learned that the will-of-the-wisp had eluded him and was still at large with infinite opportunity to make mischief. In his memoirs he wrote "She had a fine mind and a potent beauty which she knew how to use to advantage. She was never disheartened by any misfortune and always retained her evenness of temper." Marie proved him right in his analysis.

At this stage in her career she had good cause to be disheartened. Her young adorer was dead, her friends scattered, her plans were wrecked and she herself was a fugitive. Nevertheless she arrived at Nancy, the capital of Lorraine, as gay and insouciant as ever and proceeded to use her "potent beauty" to the best advantage.

Marie might have been expected to admit failure but she seemed ignorant of the very meaning of the word. A King and Queen had failed; a Prince, six Dukes and a Count had failed. Now she was going to use as her pawns a princeling and a few assorted European countries. Admitted that she had a sublimely feminine lack of proportion, the fact remains that Marie de Chevreuse was the most magnificently, heroically, idiotically loyal friend who ever embroiled two kingdoms to bring a lover to his lady's arms.

At the Court of Lorraine, Marie repeated the triumph she had enjoyed in England. She was so adored and fêted that her lovely head might well have been turned. The Court poet wrote ecstatically:

"It is you, Madame, whom France has recognized as the luminary of all perfections, who are now to receive the same approbation from our eyes, our voices and our hearts. We confess that Lorraine has never beheld such charms, the more glorious in that they are not foreign."

This last phrase refers to the fact that Marie was by marriage a Guise, of the cadet branch of the House of Lorraine.

Duke Charles IV himself was completely infatuated with his guest and followed her around like a moon-struck sheep. He was an attractive creature, long and lean and rangy, with a mop of fair hair and raised eye-brows that gave him a look of perpetual astonishment. Although the absolute monarch of his little realm, he was of limited intelligence and easily influenced.

In a surprisingly short time, he was wax in Marie's slender but skilful hands. He became the ardent champion of his oppressed lady-love and was easily persuaded to take part in her new schemes to overthrow the government of France. He wrote a personal letter to Louis, pleading her cause and asking that she be allowed to return to France with a free pardon. Richelieu's answer was to strengthen and garrison the fortresses on the border between France and Lorraine. It was a subtle tribute to Marie's prowess as a disturber of the peace.

Marie, meanwhile, moved from Nancy to Bar-le-Duc, near the frontier, and again plunged into far-flung intrigues. The old guard of nobles, having escaped any ill consequences from their former attempt, rallied around, eager to renew the struggle. Charles had an army of Lorrainers ready and, once again, Spanish troops waited at the border. The Count de Soissons, who had fled to Turin, was stirring up trouble in the North Italian states. Venice and Savoy signified their willingness to intervene and the Austrian Emperor was backing the conspirators.

Marie now called on the Duke de Rohan to incite the Huguenots to rise. She pointed out that the strength of this new coalition promised a unique opportunity for the Huguenots to gain further concessions if not absolute independence. They fortified their cities, put an army in the field and raised the banner of revolt. Richelieu promptly took active measures and laid siege to the strong Huguenot "city of refuge," La Rochelle.

The Huguenots turned to England for help and Buckingham easily persuaded Parliament to sanction the raising of a fleet to go to the rescue of the beleaguered Protestants. The appearance of the English fleet was to be the signal for the general rising.

The little house at Bar-le-Duc was like the centre of a spider-web with its filmy strands stretching all over Europe. Often, at night, the tall cloaked figure of the Duke would slip discreetly through the door. His visits were an open secret and afforded an excuse for the mystery that shrouded the place. Unknown to the

general public, other cloaked, mysterious figures passed through that little door, delivered their despatches and disappeared again into the night.

Most important of all the messengers was the suave Montagu, who was once again the chief link between Marie de Chevreuse and Buckingham. Trim, composed, impeccably neat after the most hazardous journeys, he would appear at intervals, always carrying a bulky bag of letters. Dynamite was milky and innocuous beside the contents of that bag, and for that reason Montagu was careful never to set foot on French soil.

It was at a time like this that the essential greatness of Richelieu showed itself. He was a veritable Mussolini, controlling army and navy, finances, the administration of justice and all the departments of government. The Ministers were mere puppets, directed by his strong hand and incisive brain. On him rested all the awful responsibility of steering the ship of state through the coming storm. To cap the climax Louis fell dangerously ill and Richelieu was obliged to spend day and night at his side, transacting all the state business from the royal bedroom.

Threatened on three sides by foreign powers, faced with a serious civil war, driven almost beyond endurance by overwork and the worry caused by Marie's intrigues, the Cardinal was forced to stay up all night with Louis and humor the querulous invalid.

By superhuman efforts he managed to build and equip a small navy, raise an army and collect

materials for the siege of La Rochelle. With all this, he found time to study the mass of reports that poured in daily from his spies, and, from them, to estimate the dangers that threatened him. He knew all about the little house at Bar-le-Duc, all about Montagu, all about the bulky bag. He wanted that bag, wanted it badly, but he knew that Montagu kept beyond the reach of his arm.

Success at last lay within Marie's grasp. Buckingham had actually sailed with a strong force to relieve La Rochelle, and the troops of Lorraine and Spain were waiting for the success of his attack to launch their own. Gaston, too, was eligible again, his young wife having died in giving birth to a daughter. The King was at death's door and Richelieu at bay. Things were looking very black for him, when the beneficent power that looks after cardinals saved the situation.

Fontenay-Mareuil said of Buckingham that "he was so frivolous and vain that he was quite unfitted for serious business and still less for war." This expedition proved conclusively the truth of this statement. When he reached La Rochelle, the siege trains were not in place and the blockading of the harbor was barely begun. He could have raised the siege easily and thus given the signal for the concerted attack. Instead, he landed his men at one of the forts, lost many of them in the process, failed to reach his objective and sailed back to England for more troops.

At the same time, Montagu was careless for once, and, in the dark, came too close to the frontier.

One of Richelieu's spies had followed the messenger from England and saw his opportunity. Notifying an officer with a patrol that Montagu was within his grasp, he guided the troops to a place where, by a short dash into Lorraine, they could capture him. Caught unawares, Montagu and his precious bag were carried back into France. The envoy was rushed to the Bastille and the papers delivered to Richelieu. Nor was that all. On top of these two amazing strokes of good fortune, Louis, who had been given up for dead, recovered, and in a few weeks was with his army before La Rochelle. While Buckingham delayed in England, the harbor was blockaded with sunken stone boats and the siege works finished.

After further delays, caused by Buckingham's inefficiency and Charles' lack of funds, the fleet was again ready to sail. Then the incredible thing happened that put an end, at one lightning stroke, to Buckingham's meteoric career and to Marie's cherished hopes. A half-mad fanatic called Felton went to the Duke's rooms as he was preparing to sail for France, called him to the door and stabbed him to the heart.

Three months later La Rochelle surrendered to Richelieu and the Huguenot revolt was crushed. The whole formidable coalition was dissipated like smoke and Richelieu had triumphed again.

This second defeat left Marie de Chevreuse, for once, bereft of courage and fighting spirit. Mere failure of the conspiracy would have spurred her to renewed efforts. It was the death of Buckingham that crushed her.

In a sense, her grief for the dead Duke was personal, but it was not the grief of the disconsolate lover. Their *affaire du cœur* in London had been but a casual interlude, a duel with buttoned foils between two consummate swordsmen. The deeper affections of each were engaged elsewhere but it was apparently impossible for any man to associate with Marie without falling under the spell of her physical magnetism. Marie, for her part, was far too full of the sheer joy of loving to reject any transient pleasure that offered itself. To her, love was a perennial pastime, the salt that savored the solid food of intrigue.

It was not sorrow at the loss of a loved one that reduced Marie to a state of complete dejection. Buckingham interested her chiefly as one of the two figures about whom all her schemes had revolved. She had intrigued for years with the sole idea of bringing Anne and the Englishman together. With his death, the whole business seemed suddenly futile. To her broken spirit, any further intrigue seemed like "flogging dead horses to the moon."

For days she wandered about the little house at Bar-le-Duc like a woman in a trance, while the great edifice she had built up fell about her in ruins. It was inevitable that she would return to the great game of intrigue but, for the time being, she sat with hands relaxed and her mind dazed with the sudden shock. When the intrigue was at its height, she had given birth to a daughter, Charlotte Marie de Lorraine. With the collapse of her plans, she had a resurgence of maternal

feeling. The baby absorbed all her attention and she longed to be with her family in the peace of Dampierre.

While she waited patiently in exile, Richelieu was gathering up the loose ends of the conspiracy and putting them in order. His triumph had been absolute but was not marred this time by any executions. The only blood that flowed was Buckingham's, if we except the casualties in the heroic defence of La Rochelle.

With all the trumps in his hands, the Cardinal could afford to be generous. He even seemed eager to conciliate all the parties involved in the conspiracy. After all, he could hardly imprison the Duke of Lorraine, or impeach the King of England for High Treason. Only Montagu, caught red-handed with the incriminating documents, was in any danger.

When Anne of Austria heard of the envoy's arrest she nearly went mad with terror. She paced up and down her room, wringing her hands, and could neither eat nor sleep. She was afraid that the papers he carried would incriminate her and her guilty conscience made her a prey to the most dismal forebodings.

Finally she sent for her faithful servant, La Porte, and had him admitted to her room at midnight. It was taking a fearful risk but she was desperate. She told him of her fears and implored him to get word to Montagu not to betray her. La Porte managed to get in touch with the envoy on his way to the Bastille, mingled with the guard in the darkness and exchanged a few words with the prisoner. We have his own account of the adventure. He asked Montagu if the Queen were in

danger. "Montagu replied that she was neither directly nor indirectly named in the papers and assured me that, if he were questioned, he would rather die than say ought that would injure her."

In those grim days, being "questioned" was apt to involve one of those subterranean chambers where questions were asked with the aid of the rack, the thumbscrew, and a dozen other unspeakable engines for inflicting extreme agony without the merciful release of death. Montagu, knowing this, faced the prospect calmly. Anne, when she heard his promise, "danced for joy." Perhaps Marie had a sense of the fitness of things when she planned a marriage between Anne and Gaston. They were a well-matched pair, self-centred, cowardly, indifferent to the fate of others.

Fortunately, Richelieu's all-embracing triumph made him lenient. With the Huguenots crushed, Buckingham dead and the conspiracy at an end, he saw that nothing was to be gained by severity. Montagu was treated with the courtesy due to a distinguished, if involuntary, guest, and was released shortly afterwards. In an interview with the Cardinal after his release he said frankly that: "The whole misunderstanding had arisen out of the refusal to receive Buckingham in Paris and the ill-treatment meted out to Madame de Chevreuse." This is confirmed by the comment made by Madame de Motteville: "The Duke of Buckingham set up a quarrel between the two crowns solely to create the necessity for his own return to France to negotiate the treaty."

Now a dagger had pierced the passionate heart; the foolish, restless brain was at rest, and the beautiful slim body lay quietly in its grave. The treaty was negotiated, but without the assistance of the Duke of Buckingham. The intriguing Duchess, however, figured in it to an extent unbelievable in these days of impersonal international relations.

In the preliminary diplomatic discussions, the clause on which the English ambassadors insisted most strongly was the forgiveness of Madame de Chevreuse. Richelieu, who discusses the matter most frankly in his memoirs, explains that King Charles was determined to win his point even though he was unwilling to have her name appear in the formal documents. "She was a Princess much beloved in England," he writes, "and one for whom the King entertained an especial regard. He would be greatly obliged if His Majesty (Louis) would not displease him in this."

Richelieu's response was characteristic. He realized fully how much of the responsibility for the recent crisis rested on Marie's shoulders, but he was shrewd enough to see that she could be as valuable an ally as she was a dangerous enemy. He wrote to the French Ambassador in England: "His Majesty finds great difficulty as concerning the return of Madame de Chevreuse, who has done a great deal of mischief and may do more in future: and may, for the same reasons, do good and bring advantage to the King's service."

Writing to Louis, Richelieu speaks less diplomatically: "It is difficult and beyond hope that this

lady could ever do good, being of so evil a disposition. Still, as the malignant planets augment their malignancy when they are in a habitation they dislike and, on the contrary, their aspects soften when they are in a habitation that pleases them, then perhaps she will relax something of the malignancy of her mind, if she is withdrawn from exile. Added to which it is advisable to make some concessions to the urgent entreaties of her husband."

The Sieur de Chateauneuf, Ambassador at the Court of St. James, was pessimistic about the chances of the Duchess turning over a new leaf. Discussing the question of her pardon, he wrote: "There are difficulties. Madame de Chevreuse is a woman whose spite surpasses that of her sex. It is a proven fact that several persons of power and condition have been turned away from their duty by their adherence to their passion for her."

"Malignant," "spiteful"—strong adjectives to use in speaking of a lady, but time has its little revenges. In a few short years Richelieu was to be at her feet, infatuated, driven to desperation by what he called her "insupportable caprices"; Chateauneuf would not only "be turned away from his duty" but would sacrifice his loyalty to the Cardinal, wreck his career, and spend seventeen years in prison because of his own "adherence to his passion" for the lovely siren.

Blissfully ignorant of the future, Cardinal Richelieu discussed the treaty with the English Ambassadors and tried to extort better terms in exchange for the pardon of Charles' favorite. Meanwhile

another partisan appeared on the scene to fight Marie's battles. The Duke of Lorraine arrived in Paris to make his peace and was prepared to grant substantial concessions on condition that the fair conspirator was forgiven for her share in the trouble. He asked that she be allowed to return to her Chateau at Dampierre "in consideration for which he would do anything he was asked to do."

It was a situation calculated to appal any right-minded statesman. Two important treaties hinged on one mischievous woman. The prosperity, if not the safety, of France depended largely on her immunity from punishment.

Richelieu saw that it was a good time to make concessions. He was already engaged in a sizable war with Germany. Trouble was brewing in Savoy, and relations with Spain were strained to breaking point. With England an ally and Lorraine guarding his eastern frontier, his hands would be free for these other wars. Otherwise, he would be fighting all Europe singlehanded. The fate of Europe rested in one scale. Revenge on one troublesome woman, not yet thirty years old, rested in the other. He was not even sure that he wanted revenge.

The statesman admired her swift brain, the patriot claimed it for the service of France, the natural man dreamed hidden dreams of glowing, laughing, blue eyes and slim delicious curves. Richelieu decided that clemency was the better part of justice and in a short time won the sulky, vengeful Louis over to his way of thinking. To save their faces, and to spare King Charles embarrassment, Richelieu announced that the King of

France was graciously pleased to pardon the Duchess because of his love for the Duke, her husband. Even then the pardon had its limits. Marie might return to France but she was to reside at Dampierre and was not to enter Paris. Above all, she was forbidden to hold any communication whatsoever with the Queen.

Kings, princes and ambassadors had been losing sleep over Marie's fate and international relations had hung precariously in the balance, but she herself was supremely indifferent. When the news came that her exile was at an end, she received it without emotion, took her tiny daughter, and set out on her journey to Dampierre.

There, in the peaceful beauty of the Chateau, she relapsed into domesticity and devoted herself to her children. She now had four, the son and daughter of de Luynes, Anne Marie de Lorraine, born in England, and Charlotte Marie, who had made her appearance at Bar-le-Duc. If prenatal influences amount to anything, Charlotte could be used as a test case. Born at a time when her mother was engaged in a wide-flung intrigue, the girl developed a taste for the intricate game and later was deeply involved in the complicated affairs of the Fronde.

The rustic charms of the country-side; the calm of life in the Chateau, broken only by the voices of children; an existence complicated solely by the intricacies of swaddling-clothes, soon palled on one who had used Europe as her chessboard and crowned heads as her pawns. Once peace had restored her shattered nerves,

Marie's magnificent vitality returned and, with it, her craving for action. She longed for the life of the Court, the battle of wits, the clash of personalities and the thrill of intrigue.

Before her impatience could goad her into making a false move, the ban was lifted and she was summoned to Court. Anne was responsible for the recall of her favorite and achieved it with the help and co-operation of Richelieu. To explain what happened, it is necessary to trace the progress of events at Court during Marie's exile.

CHAPTER VIII

WITH the trial of Chalais and the ignominious collapse of Gaston two years before, Anne had fallen into dire disgrace. There was no documentary evidence to connect her with the conspiracy, but the circumstantial evidence was strong. Gaston, in his confession, had accused her directly and the gossip of the English Court had linked her name with his. Furthermore, the heir-apparent had been heard to say publicly that her childlessness was the King's fault, and he had offered, with his cynical sneer, to prove it.

Since public denunciation of his wife would cause a scandal, Louis had her summoned to a room where, with the Queen-Mother and Richelieu, he sat in judgment. Sitting humbly on a stool before her judges, Anne was formally charged with being a party to the plot. Confident that there was no proof against her, she gave a convincing exhibition of injured innocence and denied the charge. When accused of desiring the King's death in order that she might marry Gaston, she replied, somewhat tactlessly, "I should not have gained enough by the change."

Unable to get any admission of guilt from his wife, Louis abused her angrily, calling her a traitor, an ingrate, a perfidious snake in the grass. Anne listened,

cowed but triumphant. His tirade was a confession of failure and hard words break no bones. Finally Louis issued an order that no man might enter the Queen's room unless he himself were present. Anne was then dismissed from the royal presence.

Weeping dramatically, she retired and sent word to Marie de Chevreuse that all was well. She was in disgrace, but safe.

Richelieu now concentrated on his European wars. He was supporting the claim of the Duke de Nevers to the throne of Mantua, a policy which would give France a foothold in Northern Italy. The rival candidate was Charles Emmanuel of Savoy, who had married Louis' sister, Christine. Marie de Medici, always ready to put family considerations before the good of the State, strenuously opposed the policy of Richelieu. Louis ignored her protests and marched away to war, leaving his mother the doubtful consolation of acting as Regent in his absence.

Her failure to prevent this war proved to Marie de Medici that she had finally lost her hold over her son. The Cardinal, the humble cleric whom she had raised to power, was now supreme. In the best interests of France, he had thrown down the gauntlet to his former patroness. She picked it up and declared a private war of her own which was to last until the end of her embittered life.

Richelieu achieved a great success in Mantua and put Nevers on the throne. Then he crushed an abortive rising of the Huguenots, who had risen with

Marie de Medici
(From a steel engraving)

the financial backing of the Pope, and returned in triumph to Paris. With him went the delighted Louis, now quite convinced that he was a military genius. They arrived to find the Court in a turmoil and the Queen-Mother on the war-path.

Bitter, envenomed, she attacked Richelieu in season and out of season. As a counter-move, he cultivated Anne with the idea that her friendship would offset the malice of the dowager. That autumn the Court witnessed the unbelievable sight of the young Queen and her ancient foe, the Cardinal, behaving as friends and allies.

Anne had no good reason for loving her mother-in-law, and had much to gain by an alliance with the all-powerful Richelieu. Since the exposure of the conspiracy, she had been under a cloud, and markedly out of favor with her outraged husband. The support of the Cardinal would do much to restore her prestige. With his help she might even bring about the recall of the exiled Marie.

Richelieu, too, stood to profit by the new alliance. Indifferent as he was to personal popularity, he realized the folly of making unnecessary enemies and his former treatment of the Queen had made her appear in the light of a martyr. The struggle that he foresaw with the Queen-Mother would be fought out, not on battlefields or across the Council table, but in bedrooms and boudoirs, with gossip and insinuation the weapons employed. In the battle for the King's confidence, Anne would be an asset. In winning her, she would win her

sympathizers and might even bring over to his side that arch-intriguer, Marie de Chevreuse.

With the recall of the Duchess as their common aim, Anne and the Cardinal soon came to terms. In exchange for her friendship and support in the coming struggle, he agreed to bring Marie back to Court. One wonders how he won the consent of Louis, who by now had an engrained hatred for the lovely marplot. But Richelieu performed many miracles during his tenure of office. In due course, Madame la Duchesse de Chevreuse was informed that His Majesty was graciously pleased to receive her at Court.

Marie shook the dust of Dampierre off her flying feet and appeared in Paris with all the vivid abandon of Ariel released from his tree. Once again the vast mansion on the Rue St. Honoré blazed with lights. The great court-yard beneath the stately Renaissance windows was filled with footmen and lackeys, idling away the time, while indoors, their masters were congratulating the Duchess on her return. The Court was aquiver with excitement and curiosity, waiting to see how the prodigal would be received when she presented herself after her long exile. Gossip was rife and its tenor may be gathered from the sub-acid comment made by Madame de Motteville: "Her beauty always had charms for the gallant Cardinal, and no doubt the lady promised him all he wanted of her."

What Richelieu wanted of Marie is veiled in ambiguity. What he got was friendship and, for the time being, whole-hearted support. The Duchess was

received graciously by the King and Cardinal, rapturously by Anne and joyfully by the Court at large. While they were still wondering what would happen, she aligned herself with Anne and the Cardinal against the Queen-Mother. She, too, had her grievances against the terrible old virago and took a mischievous pleasure in paying off ancient grudges.

Putting aside old enmities, ignoring past offences, Marie and the Cardinal billed and cooed like turtle doves. We are told that she went to see him and "made him a thousand protestations of friendship and sincerity in the King's service." Nor did she stop with protestations. She brought her devoted Duke Charles to Paris and strengthened the bonds of friendship between France and Lorraine. By combining diplomatic skill with demure discretion, Marie won the sincere admiration of the Cardinal. He even paid her a compliment in a letter to the King. "Madame de Chevreuse is going on well," he wrote, "and is giving good advice to the Queen."

Louis was at his hunting lodge at Monceau when an incident occurred which, indirectly, proves Marie's influence with the Cardinal. Among the gentlemen in his suite were the Duke de Chevreuse and the Duke de Montmorenci, the gallant with the slight squint who had been one of Anne's early admirers. Montmorenci aroused the ire of Chevreuse by some ribald reference to his indefatigable pursuit of the fair sex. Although he was over fifty, Chevreuse drew his sword and demanded an apology. Montmorenci was only thirty, the idol of the army and one of the finest swordsmen in

France but Chevreuse proved the better duellist and wounded his opponent severely.

The edicts against duelling were very strict, and one nobleman had already been executed for defying them. Furthermore, by drawing their swords in the court-yard of the house occupied by the King himself, the two nobles had been guilty of a grave breach of etiquette. The culprits were severely reprimanded and dismissed from Court.

Chevreuse merely retired to Dampierre and in a very short time, to his surprise and delight, was allowed to return. Marie had interceded for him and, such was her influence with the Cardinal, he was recalled several days before Montmorenci. It seems a trifling thing but was to have its effect on history. Montmorenci was offended at what he considered an affront and blamed Richelieu for showing partiality to Chevreuse. Added to other pinpricks it ranged the immensely powerful noble on the side of the Cardinal's enemies.

Peace brooded over the Court where Anne, Richelieu and Marie de Chevreuse dwelt in unaccustomed amity. Gaston found something exquisitely humorous in the situation and shattered the millennial calm by remarking in public that Marie had been brought back to court so that the Queen "might have more opportunities of bearing a child." At this tactless reference to the gay days when Marie was Superintendent of the Household, the Court shivered. Louis, his old jealousy revived, scowled blackly; Marie laughed, and Richelieu said it

was "a devilish idea." Anne looked bleak and stored up the remark in her retentive memory. Gaston seemed bent on destroying his chance of the throne. Once before he had lost it because he wanted his dinner. Now, because he could not control his jeering tongue, he won the animosity of the Queen. With her Spanish tendency to remember grievances and bide her time for vengeance, Anne allowed this remark to rankle in her mind, with curious results.

The young Queen thus added a new enemy to her list, but she was incapable of erasing the name of an old one. For ten years she had hated Richelieu and attributed much of her unhappiness to him. She had learned to dissemble and to feign friendship but the old hatred remained unabated. Once she had succeeded in having Marie de Chevreuse recalled, the deep-seated enmity in her heart reasserted itself and flamed out more fiercely than ever.

Repudiating the temporary alliance, Anne joined forces with the Queen-Mother, who was still waging her undercover war against the Cardinal. Together they plagued the King with complaints and accusations against Richelieu and did everything in their power to overthrow him. Louis, never a fluent speaker, subsided into obstinate silence. Taking this for consent, the two Queens redoubled their arguments and urged him to rid himself of the hated prelate. Worn out by their clamor, driven beyond endurance by their persistent nagging, Louis retired to his room and there "wept bitterly

for almost a whole day." Then he dried his tears and made out letters-patent creating the Cardinal "Principal Minister of State" with unheard of powers.

It was a blow to the Queen-Mother who realized more clearly than ever that her influence over her elder son was gone. There remained the impressionable Gaston who was easily convinced that the Cardinal was to blame for his fancied grievances. He and his redoubtable old mother promised each other in writing to work together for the overthrow of the Cardinal. This document was enclosed in a gold capsule and given for safe-keeping to the old Duke of Bellegarde who wore it hung around his neck on a gold chain.

Marie de Chevreuse took no direct part in the intrigues that followed. She disliked the Queen-Mother and had no confidence in her judgment, while Gaston had earned her unmitigated contempt by his cowardice in the matter of Chalais. The Cardinal was at least worthy of respect. She could not keep Anne from joining sides with her mother-in-law, but she herself remained loyal to the pledge of friendship given to Richelieu.

Gaston precipitated matters by retiring to Orleans and demanding increased revenues and estates. When, as a matter of course, they were refused, he fled to Lorraine and attempted to stir up trouble for France. Lacking Marie's skill in intrigue, his efforts were not marked with any conspicuous success but the presence of the King's brother nursing a grievance at a foreign court was bad for French prestige in the eyes of Europe.

Richelieu tried to win Gaston back by bribes and promises, but before he could succeed a crisis occupied all his attention. The trouble in Mantua broke out again and the Cardinal found himself threatened by a formidable coalition of his former foes. Instant action was necessary. He despatched an army to Italy and was preparing to follow himself, when Louis fell ill with enteric. Richelieu found himself on the horns of a dilemma. If he stayed at home, Mantua would probably be lost. If he went away, leaving Louis to the mercy of his wife and mother, he himself might be lost. To his credit, he did not hesitate.

Putting himself at the head of his army, Richelieu made another of his lightning pounces and won a decisive victory. An eye-witness has left us a fine picture of the fighting Cardinal on this campaign: "He wore a blue cuirass over a brown coat embroidered with gold. He had a feather around his hat and two pages went before him on horseback, one carrying his gauntlets and another his helmet. In this guise he crossed the river on horseback, with his sword at his side and two pistols at his saddle-bow. When he reached the other side he made his horse caracole a hundred times in the presence of the army, boasting aloud that he knew something of the exercise." It is a refreshing picture and shows that there remained, even in the awe-inspiring Cardinal, some trace of the small boy who loved playing soldiers.

We need not follow the convolutions of war and diplomacy which finally resulted in a complete triumph for Richelieu and France. The only fact of vital interest to this chronicle is the appearance on the scene

of Mazarin. He was at this time a papal agent and made a dramatic entry under a flag of truce. At that time battles were fought under Marquis of Queensberry rules. The two armies drew up on opposite sides of the largest plain to be found and waited for daylight. At a given signal they engaged and fought until one side won the decision. Any commander who fought at night or without warning would have been considered guilty of a breach of etiquette.

At the battle of Casale, the signal was given and both sides had begun to shoot when the young Italian appeared between the two armies, waving a flag. Bullets were whistling around him, but the power that watches over Cardinals, even potential ones, again took a hand in the game. Mazarin was saved for Anne and posterity. During the negotiations which followed the young Italian showed himself a skilled diplomat. Impressed by his sagacity and subtlety of mind, Richelieu took Mazarin into his own service and brought him back to France.

While the Cardinal was coping successfully with foes abroad, his most dangerous enemies at home were taking advantage of his absence to plan his downfall.

Louis, in spite of his mother's protests, had set out to join the army as soon as his health permitted. He got as far as Lyons when a new and more serious attack of his complaint brought him to death's door. What the fever failed to do, his physicians nearly accomplished. They bled the enfeebled youth seven times in one week and dosed him with an assortment of poisonous drugs warranted to wreck the interior economy of a goat.

The Queen-Mother and Anne now had him at their mercy. They deafened his dying ears with arguments, broke down his feeble resistance and finally extorted a promise that he would dismiss Richelieu as soon as the war had been brought to a successful conclusion. It was a great triumph for the two Queens, but Anne had her own private worries. Louis was in a precarious state and was not expected to recover. If he died, Gaston would automatically accede to the throne. Until now, Anne had cheerfully accepted the prospect of marrying her brother-in-law, but his tactless jeers had wounded her susceptibilities. She hated him now only less than she hated the thought of retiring into the background as a childless widow.

There has been much scandal written about the crisis at Lyons and opinions differ as to the authenticity of any of the incidents. According to the circumstantial story of one contemporary, Louis made his will, leaving the crown to Gaston and omitting the usual clause "except in the case that our dear spouse should be *enceinte*." The story continues that Madame de Fargis, one of Anne's ladies-in-waiting, made violent love to de Berighen, the King's favorite valet and, through him, had the vital clause inserted. Our gossip relates further that Anne found herself in an extremely interesting condition which lasted only until Louis was out of danger.

These spicy details are given with a convincing air of intimate knowledge but are omitted by

conservative historians and must be taken with a certain amount of reserve.

It is an established fact that Anne was in an awkward situation. On what he thought to be his death-bed, Louis stubbornly affirmed his belief in her infidelity. She assured him, weeping, that she was absolutely innocent of any offence but he remained unmoved. When his confessor urged him to forgive all who had injured him, he said, referring to Anne: "In my present state it is my duty to forgive her. I am not bound to believe her."

After being given up for dead, Louis astonished everyone by recovering and was back in Paris in September. He was still hag-ridden by his women folk but was determined, in the depths of his stubborn secretive heart, to stand by his invaluable Minister.

The victorious Cardinal returned to the Louvre to be greeted with unconcealed venom by the Queen-Mother. Now that the war was over, she expected Louis would keep his promise. The prospect of triumph made her careless, and her malice drove her beyond the bounds of discretion. One day, in the King's presence, she turned on Madame de Combalet, the Cardinal's favorite niece, and she screamed abuse and insults at her until the poor girl was trembling with fright.

Louis made no comment, but escorted the lady-in-waiting to the door. The old Queen, carried away by wrath and annoyed by this courtesy shown to the victim of her rage, swept across the room, locked the door through which the girl had just passed and turned

on the silent King. Louis listened patiently while the storm raged around his head. Suddenly a little door leading to an unused chapel opened and Richelieu himself stepped into the room. Marie de Medici later remarked bitterly that she had lost everything because she forgot to lock that door.

From *forte*, her strident voice rose to *fortissime, accelerando*. She called Richelieu a liar, a knave and a thieving crocodile, pointed out his faults and enlarged on his mistakes. Then she made the error of explaining in detail just how she would replace him when he had departed into the outer darkness. Names, figures and plans poured out in a wild flood and were carefully noted by the wily prelate who stood humbly before her.

When, for sheer lack of breath, the impassioned monologue came to an end, Richelieu bowed respectfully, saluted the King and left the room. Louis, exhausted by the storm, retired to his own chamber and threw himself in tears on the bed. The next day, to avoid more scenes, he went to Versailles.

Thrilled by the very "exuberance of her own verbosity," blind to the workings of her son's queer mind, the Queen-Mother took silence for consent and believed that she had triumphed. The news flew about Paris that the great Cardinal had fallen and his enemies gloated over his overthrow. On that famous evening, November 11, 1630, the Queen-Mother's salons at the Tuileries were crowded while the great Palais Cardinal was deserted. The courtiers who usually thronged it, asking favors, paying court, ingratiating themselves with the

all-powerful Minister, were conspicuous by their absence. Only Father Joseph stood by while his beloved master went down into the dark valley of defeat and disillusionment.

In that hour the iron entered into Richelieu's soul. He had gained a glorious victory by force of arms, crushed civil dissensions and raised France to a position of commanding strength in Europe, only to be discarded at the insistence of a jealous, hysterical old woman. Deserted by the sycophants who usually fawned on him, friendless and alone save for his secretary, Richelieu watched the slow hours pass and waited for the message of dismissal.

It never came. Instead came a summons from Louis to attend him at Versailles. Hoping against hope, the Cardinal was ushered into the presence of the young King to whose service he had dedicated his life. Louis, who was standing moodily looking out of the window, turned suddenly with one of his rare smiles. Putting his hands on Richelieu's shoulders, the King assured him with genuine affection in his voice that he had never seriously considered dismissing his most valuable servant. He gave the most convincing signs of his entire friendship and confidence. The Cardinal returned to Paris walking on air.

That same day the Court realized that, far from being dismissed, Richelieu was more firmly in the saddle than ever. The tide rolled back, his antechambers were thronged and the sycophants protested

their devotion in voices even more honeyed than before. But Richelieu never forgot. The "Day of Dupes" had taught him a grim lesson in human nature. Forthwith he would walk alone and trust no man. He and the King together would face all Europe and woe to the man or woman who should come between them.

In the meantime, vengeance was sweet. The names mentioned by the Queen-Mother in the course of her wild diatribe had not been forgotten. Patiently, one by one, the unfortunate individuals mentioned were singled out for punishment, and were sent to exile, prison or the block to expiate the crime of conspiring against the Cardinal. The Princess de Conti, that merry dame who had been one of Marie's boon companions, was dismissed from Court and died shortly afterwards. Bassompierre, the debonair friend of the great Henry and the darling of the ladies, was thrown into the Bastille. He was warned several hours in advance and could have escaped but was confident that the imprisonment would be for a few days only. Instead of making for the frontier he spent the night burning over six thousand love letters from various ladies. Louis regretted his imprisonment bitterly, but had not the courage to release his friend until Richelieu's death, ten years later.

A certain Marillac had been mentioned as Richelieu's successor as Minister of State. The vengeful Cardinal had him arrested and tried on some trumpery charge of defrauding the government on army stores. He tried him before a special commission, presided over by

Chateauneuf, whom he had brought from England for the purpose. By one vote Marillac was found guilty and executed out of hand. When his friends protested against the outrage, Richelieu expressed the deepest sympathy but said, wiping away a crocodile tear: "He must have been guilty, since the judges condemned him."

Marillac has nothing to do with the story of Marie de Chevreuse but his trial brings Chateauneuf, for the second time, into the picture.

The tragic outcome of the "Day of Dupes" merely increased the savage malice of the Queen-Mother towards the Cardinal. Since Louis had failed her, she fell back on Gaston and spurred him on to active measures against the Red Pest. She so lost all sense of dynastic rights that she contemplated civil war against the King, with Gaston as the rallying-point. Marie de Medici was indeed following closely in the steps of Catherine de Medici, who was said to have poisoned one son to make way for another.

Marie de Chevreuse had planned to overthrow Louis in favor of Gaston but she had enough organizing ability and finesse to make her scheme feasible. The Queen-Mother was conspicuously lacking in both qualities and was beaten before she started.

Following the "Day of Dupes," the Queen-Mother received a courteous but firm request to retire to Moulins and stay there. Instead, with a sort of futile obstinacy, she went to Compiegne. Gaston was in Lorraine, and between them they might have caused trouble but Marie de Medici lacked the necessary patience or ability to

intrigue. She wasted all her nervous energy in giving way to futile tempers and horrified her associates by her indiscretions. Richelieu knew every twist of her venomous nature and played on her weaknesses. At first he set a strong guard around her house, making her a virtual prisoner. Inside the house were his spies who kept him informed of the progress of her schemes.

After a few months of this farce, the guards became very lax. Seizing what seemed a heaven-sent opportunity, Marie de Medici escaped and made her way over the border to Brussels. Only too late did she realize that she had played straight into her enemy's hands. She had, very obligingly, exiled herself and was never allowed to enter France again.

Marie de Medici had been the evil genius of France and it is hard to find a mitigating trait in her character. Her craving for power and her love of money drove her to consent to, if not to plan, the murder of her husband, the great Henry. Her poor judgment and partiality towards Concini had reduced France almost to bankruptcy, and her policy throughout was disastrous. When she tried to deprive France of Richelieu, the one man who could bring order out of chaos, she met her Waterloo, and retribution overtook her. For years she wandered about Europe, always a stormy petrel, always trying to stir up trouble for France. Finally she wore out her welcome at every Court in Europe and was reduced to sponging on commoners. At times she was so destitute that she was obliged to break up furniture for firewood.

The Queen of England, the King of France, the Queen of Spain, the Duchess of Savoy, were her children, but in none of their domains had she a place to rest her head. Finally in 1643 she died at Cologne, a pensioner on the bounty of Peter Paul Rubens, the painter.

CHAPTER IX

DURING the two-year duel between Richelieu and the Queen-Mother, Marie de Chevreuse had played the rôle of innocent bystander. Little as she loved Richelieu, she at least recognized his ability. For the old Queen she cherished a deep dislike tinged with contempt, and watched her inept manœuvres with the scorn of the expert for the bungler. The victory of Richelieu was only a matter of time, and Marie bent all her energies to keeping Anne clear of the inevitable debacle.

Meanwhile the Queen-Mother stormed on her venomous way and raised a mighty commotion. It was in July, 1631, that she fled to Brussels. At the same time Gaston made his way to Lorraine and took refuge with Duke Charles. The Duke had recently signed a treaty with France but could not resist the temptation of another tussle with his big neighbor. Repudiating his treaty, he allowed imperial troops to occupy his border fortresses. Marie de Medici, meantime, was raising an army in the Spanish Netherlands.

Before the Queen-Mother's forces could be brought into play, Richelieu made one of his lightning attacks. He drove the imperial troops out of Lorraine, seized the border fortresses and forced the Duke to sign a

humiliating peace. Gaston, with his genius for doing the wrong thing, had just married Margaret of Lorraine, the Duke's sister. Caught unawares by Richelieu's attack, he was forced to flee to Brussels. His bride, left to her own devices, escaped from Nancy, dressed as a page.

Gaston enjoyed himself in the rôle of a conspirator and was spurred on by his implacable old mother. Collecting more troops, he invaded France, scattering proclamations as he came. He called on all Frenchmen to rise against the Cardinal but the response was disappointing. The Huguenots had been too recently crushed; the lesser gentry feared the heavy hand of Richelieu and the nobles despised Gaston. Only the unfortunate Montmorenci, almost against his will, was involved in the abortive revolt. His connection with it proved fatal. In a skirmish at Castelnaudari the Duke was wounded and taken prisoner.

From a safe place across the river, Gaston watched the affair without making any effort to rescue his ally. Instead, he disbanded his troops and ran home to mother. From his refuge in Brussels he entered into negotiations with the Cardinal. At first he demanded the release of Montmorenci, a free pardon for himself and a large gift of money to cover his expenses. Richelieu, who was a wily soul, ignored these demands. Gaston promptly climbed down from his high horse and began to cringe. He "confessed that he had been ill-advised, acknowledged himself much obliged to the King for the clemency he had shown and was indebted to the Cardinal *whom he had always liked and esteemed.*"

In exchange for pardon, Gaston made a confession implicating all his friends and abandoned the Duke to his fate. Knowing that no ordinary tribunal would dare to convict "the magnificent Montmorenci," Richelieu appointed a special tribunal. To ensure a conviction, he headed it by his faithful henchman, Chateauneuf, who had been so obliging in the affair of Marillac. After a farce of a trial, Montmorenci was found guilty and executed the same day, September 30, 1632.

Marie de Chevreuse had stood aloof from the activities of Gaston and the Queen-Mother, but she had not been idle. The unnatural alliance between herself and the Cardinal had lasted two years and during all that time she had been unnaturally well-behaved. With rare self-control, she had refrained from intrigue and concentrated on keeping Anne out of trouble. Up to a point she had succeeded until the deep-rooted hostility between Queen and Minister had flared out again. Richelieu then renewed his subterranean attacks on Anne and by so doing had forfeited the support of Marie de Chevreuse.

There seems no explanation for Marie's impassioned loyalty to a woman who was really not worth it. For forty years the Duchess devoted her life to the cause of her friend and her fanatic devotion was finally only killed by Anne herself.

The mighty dust raised by Gaston and Marie de Medici had formed a convenient screen for certain dubious activities of Madame de Chevreuse. For months she had been at work in her subtle fashion, pre-

paring the ground for a conspiracy of her own. The threads of this new intrigue covered Europe, from London to Madrid and from Brussels to Vienna. Wherever the name of Richelieu was hated, wherever his downfall was desired, there were her agents and her allies.

Both Spain and the Empire recognized him as the genius who was making France the dominant power in Europe, and were ready to assist any effort to overthrow him. In England, Queen Henriette Marie and her party were naturally opposed to the man who had driven her mother, Marie de Medici, from France. In Brussels, the Queen-Mother and Gaston had their supporters and were sure of aid from the Spanish government established there. All over France were nobles divided between hatred of this upstart prelate and fear of the blows he was dealing their privileged order.

Universally hated, universally feared, Richelieu stood almost alone. Father Joseph was his only intimate friend but there were a small group of trusted servants bound to him by self-interest. The Cardinal knew how to reward faithful service and there were men shrewd enough to see that loyalty to him would be well repaid. Outstanding among these was Charles de l'Aubespine, Sieur de Chateauneuf.

Realizing that adherence to Richelieu would lead to advancement, Chateauneuf had been conspicuous by his blind devotion to the Cardinal's service. Rapid promotion' had followed his efforts, and in every post he proved himself a valuable servant. As Ambassador in London, he handled the peace negotiations with ability

and, as we have seen, was outspoken in his condemnation of the intriguing Duchess.

Brought back to France especially to try Marillac, he himself cast the deciding vote for conviction and thus gave the Cardinal his desired revenge. So satisfactory was his conduct that Richelieu had appointed him to the thankless task of trying Montmorenci. Here again he proved his devotion to the Cardinal by condemning the Duke to death in the teeth of all France. He was rewarded for his services by being made Keeper of the Seals, a position equivalent to that of the English Lord Chancellor.

Chateauneuf was over fifty, a sober, hard-headed business man. Ambition was his besetting sin, but it was a measured ambition and he kept both feet firmly on the ground. Since Richelieu was the greatest man in France, he would serve Richelieu. Since Richelieu worked his assistants hard, he would prove himself more energetic and thorough than any. Since Richelieu hated wagging tongues, except in his enemies, he would be silent, discreet, a model bureaucrat.

Tall and solidly built, Chateauneuf had an air of weighty dignity, enhanced by his full black beard. He habitually dressed richly, but in sombre colors, and his vanity was only betrayed by his fondness for jewellery. Full red lips suggested an ardent temperament and his keen dark eyes were apt to rest fondly on a well-turned ankle, but he had never been accused of anything more than an academic interest in the ladies.

Such was Chateauneuf, the Keeper of the Seals and the trusted confidant of Richelieu. In the whole of France, it would have been difficult to find a man less likely to lend himself to any intrigue aimed at his master, the Cardinal.

Nevertheless Marie de Chevreuse decided that the Keeper of the Seals was necessary to her plans. Her former intrigues had failed because of Richelieu's unequalled intelligence service. This time, she herself intended to arrange for early, accurate information. Who should be in a better position to supply it than this worthy bureaucrat?

She studied her man and realized that the hard head was balanced by a passionate heart. The staid official was but the outer shell of a full-blooded, susceptible male, and his devotion to the Cardinal was dictated by overweening ambition rather than by personal loyalty.

Skilfully Marie set to work, and the expressed disapproval of Chateauneuf for her mischievous proclivities only added zest to the game. She slowly melted his hostility, won his confidence and began her assault on his heart. In less than a month the citadel had ignominiously surrendered, and Chateauneuf was her captive. From then on, he was infatuated, obsessed, helpless in the grip of one of "those fatal passions that mark the departure of youth."

Marie was far too wise to frighten her victim by discussing treason. She contented herself, at first, by wheedling out of him secrets of vital importance

to her cause. Chateauneuf, dazed by this overwhelming emotion, was himself unaware of his indiscretions, but there was a steady leakage of valuable information from headquarters. Plans of the intended attack on Lorraine reached Charles in time for him to take defensive measures. News of the most confidential nature was known at Court and freely discussed in the Queen's apartments.

Richelieu learned of this through his spies but was ignorant of the identity of the traitor. Then his eyes began to rest with thoughtful menace on the Keeper of the Seals. To all appearances, Chateauneuf was as loyal as ever, but his devoted attendance on the intriguing Duchess was in itself suspicious. Richelieu began to suspect the presence of an Ethopian in the political woodpile. Chateauneuf, meanwhile, drifted about in a happy haze, neglecting his work, giving away his secrets, oblivious of the suspicions forming in the shrewd mind of the Cardinal.

Marie, as ready as a wild animal to scent danger, saw that the Cardinal was on the alert. At all costs she must throw dust in his eyes and keep him inactive until her plans had time to mature. With the utmost aplomb she began to envelop the suspicious cleric in a fragrant smoke-screen of delicious emotions.

Since her return to Court, Marie had cultivated the Cardinal's friendship and had been on excellent terms with him. Inevitably, his feelings had progressed from wary amiability to open admiration. He had found a woman who, both in brains and beauty, measured up to his standards, and had endeavored in

every way to win her esteem. Working on this admirable basis, Marie quickly reduced the Cardinal to a state most unbecoming a Prince of the Church.

Richelieu knew only too well that he lacked that ingratiating manner which is so efficacious in dealing with women. Many rebuffs had discouraged him. Now it was subtly borne in upon him that the lovely Duchess, the very Queen of Hearts, was actually on the point of succumbing to his wooing. Rising gallantly to the occasion, he pursued her ardently. The lady remained unaccountably coy. Yet he was allowed to feel that the rich fruit might drop into his hand at any moment and, in the thrill of anticipation, was deaf and blind to all else. The dignified Cardinal was giving an excellent imitation of a dog waiting for a bird to fall out of a tree while rabbits gambolled safely past his very nose.

Louis was disgusted at the sight of his faithful Minister behaving like a moon-struck poet and warned him repeatedly that Marie was only playing with him. Richelieu smiled fatuously and ignored the warning. Then the King wrote: "I have just received notice that a messenger from England has gone to wait on Madame de Chevreuse. If she reports this to you, it will be some proof of her amendment. If she says nothing, confess, at least, for the last time, that she is deceiving you and laughing at both of us."

We do not know the sequel to the story of the English méssenger but Marie evidently succeeded in pulling the wool over those eagle eyes. Louis fretted and fussed, but to no purpose. Richelieu, fathoms deep in

love, refused to consider the bare possibility of betrayal. He felt that in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, this delicious creature would have surrendered to him all her fragrant loveliness. Until that blissful hour he could not be bothered reading stupid reports from spies or discussing absurdities with the King.

This infatuation of the Cardinal served a double purpose. It kept him blind to all signs of conspiracy and at the same time brought Chateauneuf to a malleable state of mind. Marie had hesitated to attack the loyalty to the Cardinal which was part and parcel of his ambition. Now the Keeper of the Seals saw in Richelieu a dangerous rival for the affections of his lady. Jealousy undermined his loyalty, and Marie was not slow to seize the opportunity. She carefully implanted in Chateauneuf's mind the bright thought that the Cardinal was merely a mortal whose place could be filled by an able successor.

Ambition quickened in the Keeper of Seals as he pictured himself the greatest man in France, supplanting the Cardinal and doing his work. He even hoped for the support of the Queen, the Duchess and the powerful party opposed to Richelieu. Gradually he was let into the secret and promptly declared himself Marie's servant to command. He became her right-hand man and threw himself into the dangerous business with all his genuine ability and force.

Jealousy had conquered the Keeper of the Seals, but it was a two-edged weapon and Marie was playing a dangerous game. Richelieu must be kept in play but, at the same time, Chateauneuf must not be

made too jealous. He must still regard Marie as the helpless victim of a relentless but unprovoked pursuit. The ice was very thin but Marie crossed it safely, driving her ill-assorted team of desirous males. With the consummate skill of a finished coquette she kept both her lovers at fever-heat and still found time to carry on an enormous correspondence with the Emperor, the Courts of Spain, England, Lorraine and Brussels, and such independent malcontents as Soissons and Vendôme.

When the game became too fast for comfort, the incorrigible Marie retired to bed with some vague ailment. From there she carried on yet another correspondence with her two gallants, assuring each in turn of her entire devotion. Richelieu, as a matter of principle, destroyed all letters, but Chateauneuf was less discreet. We have over sixty of the amazing epistles she sent him at this critical stage and from them can reconstruct the whole affair.

Meanwhile matters were moving swiftly to their climax. It was only necessary to keep Richelieu blind and deaf a little longer and circumstances appeared unexpectedly favorable. The King had planned a formal visit to La Rochelle and the northwest of France, but at the last moment was unable to go. Richelieu offered himself as substitute and was duly appointed to represent the King before his subjects. The Cardinal was in a seventh heaven of delight. With the vanity of the wooing male, he looked forward to pointing out the scenes of his greatest triumph, the siege of La Rochelle. The Court would visit his magnificent private estates and he would

have the honor of acting as host to the Queen and her suite. Above all, he was to spend weeks in the company of his mistress in all the easy intimacy of travel, far from the formalities of Court and the dull routine of State business.

The Court started off with the usual unwieldy mob of guards, servants, equerries, cooks, couriers, attendants and vague hangers-on. Richelieu, dimming even the royal party by his magnificence, was all that is most gallant. Anne was polite and gracious, and Marie coyly responsive. Her plans were going forward splendidly and it was only necessary to keep the infatuated man on the road, happy and unsuspicious, for a little while. Then the struggle would be over and Anne would be free from the crushing weight of the Red Cardinal's enmity.

The prospect of success after two failures was intoxicating. It gave an added brightness to the devastating eyes turned so kindly on the Cardinal, a merrier lilt to the laughing voice and a keener edge to the shafts of wit that kept her circle in helpless giggles. For the third time she was on the verge of success. Then, once again, luck perched on the Cardinal's shoulder.

It came in a curious guise. The cavalcade had reached Bordeaux when Richelieu suddenly succumbed to an acutely painful bladder complaint complicated by an internal abscess. Raging with fever and suffering absolute agony, he was put to bed while physicians, hastily summoned, shook their heads dubiously. They were helpless in the face of such a condition and saw little hope of their patient's recovery.

The news of the Cardinal's precarious condition robbed Anne of what little common sense she possessed. Assured that her enemy was dying, she rejoiced openly and insisted on continuing the journey. Marie protested, begged for just a little patience, just a little discretion, but it was useless. Anne was as stubborn as a mule beneath her deceptive mildness of manner. Once she had got the bit between her teeth it was impossible to turn her from her chosen course.

Leaving the unfortunate Cardinal helpless at Bordeaux, the Court hastened to La Rochelle and plunged into the most hectic whirl of gaiety. The townspeople assumed that the elaborate festivities planned for the royal visit would be cancelled as a mark of respect to the dying prelate. To their astonishment, Anne ordered that the programme be carried out and went so far as to give extra entertainments of her own.

Days and nights passed in an endless round of festivities, with Chateauneuf, blind to all caution, playing a prominent part. He had hitherto been regarded as one of the Cardinal's most devoted henchmen. Now, deserting his dying master, he danced attendance on the Queen and the Duchess de Chevreuse. Magnificent in gala dress, ablaze with the jewels he loved, he was the the gayest of the gay. It was an open declaration that he had thrown off the old allegiance and taken service under the banner of the Queen. Anne, herself, was intoxicated with joy at the prospect of being freed from the Red Menace and set the pace in a way that shocked the sober burghers of La Rochelle.

Decent people all over France frowned at such tactless behavior. Louis, hearing of it, scowled and muttered, but Anne was beyond control. Her only concession to convention was to send a courier daily to inquire about the health of His Eminence. Even in that it was obvious that she really only wanted to know how soon he could be expected to die.

One of these messengers was La Porte who gives us a pathetic picture of the dying man. Physically at the lowest ebb, Richelieu's spirit was unquenchable and the flame of jealousy burned fiercely in the ravaged body. He questioned La Porte shrewdly about the Court at La Rochelle and seemed to be exceptionally well-informed. Finally he asked, with a wistful note in his voice: "Does Chateauneuf stay late at the Palace at night?" La Porte was tactfully non-committal but Richelieu had other informants. From them he heard all about the wild revels of the Court, the Queen's frankly-expressed joy over his illness and the part played by Chateauneuf. He heard other things too—little hints that assumed a dark significance in his shrewd mind. Freed from the blinding mist of emotion, he saw clearly. He realized at last that he had been fooled and all the old warnings, previously disregarded, rushed back with added force.

Feeling that the State was in danger, Richelieu made one supreme effort to throw off the illness that had almost mastered him. Jealousy gave him new vitality and he made a gallant fight for life. For a time it seemed hopeless and on November 20 news of his death was circulated in Paris. It even reached Brussels where Marie

de Medici, Gaston and the little group of exiles lighted a huge bonfire to celebrate the passing of the red shadow. Richelieu could have said, like Mark Twain, that the reports of his death were grossly exaggerated. The fact that his enemies were already triumphing over his end gave the needed fillip to his spirit. By Christmas he was back again in Paris, thinner than ever, trembling with weakness, but very much alive.

Always a bonny fighter, he fought his way back from the very gates of death to confound his enemies. With hollow eyes burning fiercely in the pale face, the bloodless lips one thin implacable line, the gaunt figure in trailing scarlet robes appeared at Court like an avenging angel. Those who had rejoiced so prematurely shivered with apprehension but the Cardinal held his hand. His whole mind was clouded with suspicion but he wanted proof—indisputable, documentary proof—before taking action.

Perhaps he was secretly hoping against hope that his doubts would prove to be unfounded. Marie certainly did her best to convince him of the fact. Chateauneuf had endangered everything by his reckless indiscretion at La Rochelle but the situation might still be saved. Marie flung herself gallantly into the breach.

Once again she enmeshed the suspicious man in a tangle of emotions and reduced him to a state bordering on lunacy. Away from her, his cool analytical brain was convinced that there was conspiracy afoot. With her, it was different. The fragrance of her slim

loveliness clouded his mind, and her maddening provocative eyes taunted him into amorous folly.

Intent on the pursuit of the elusive nymph who seemed always escaping, yet always within reach, he swung from hope to despair, from faith to darkest doubt. One of Marie's letters to Chateauneuf gives us a picture of him at this critical time:

"The Cardinal assured me that he had now no secrets from me and that he would positively do all that I commanded provided that I would live with him in such a manner as to assure him that he stood higher in my esteem and confidence than any other on earth. He parted on good terms with me but I never found him in such a mood as to-day—so restless and variable in manner, now carried away by anger, then pacified in a moment into extreme humility. He cannot endure that I should listen to you."

Richelieu's jealousy of Chateauneuf was the great danger in this battle of wits and Marie tried to coach her fellow-conspirator. In each letter she urges caution and one is particularly insistent:

"I wish you to appear to be displeased with me and to despise me. I know this will be painful to you but nevertheless you must obey me in this. *It is absolutely necessary*. Send me an answer and *beware of the Cardinal*."

Richelieu was struggling helplessly in the toils of this infatuation but he had his lucid moments and set his spies on the trail. Vague hints, sporadic warn-

ings and past experience combined to give him the probable sources of trouble. Not only in France, but in Brussels and England his agents were on the alert for any whisper of treason.

For a month he waited in vain for confirmation of his suspicions. Marie had covered her tracks with consummate skill and forced her confederates to be discreet. Then, as before, she was betrayed by the reckless folly of her friends in England.

Chateauneuf's post as Ambassador in London had been taken by Fontenay-Mareuil. It was he who had so strongly advised Chevreuse against marrying the lovely widow and he still persisted in his disapproval of Marie. In February he reported to the Cardinal that there was a conspiracy afoot and that "the plotters were moving heaven and earth to have Holland appointed English Ambassador to France, so that he might assist them with their cabals."

On top of this came a letter from an Englishman called Weston, who was Secretary to the Treasury and a member of the party opposed to Queen Henriette Marie. He wrote to Richelieu, confidentially, that he "possessed positive proof that the Sieur de Chateauneuf designed to ruin the Cardinal and that the Queen of England had said on several occasions that the Keeper of the Seals was her particular servant and would guide the State better than the Cardinal when the latter was dead."

Here was confirmation indeed, and all the Cardinal's jealous doubts were justified. Not content with

lifting his eyes to the woman whom Richelieu had chosen for himself, the insolent Keeper of the Seals had actually aspired to the Cardinal's position in the State. His fate was sealed, but still the Minister delayed action. He wanted, even while he dreaded, to know what part the Duchess had played in this, and was determined to catch all the conspirators in the net at once. The trail led straight to her. Holland was her former lover, and was still her ardent adorer. Chateauneuf had made himself the laughing stock of the Court by his open infatuation. There was still another suggestive fact.

Fontenay-Mareuil had reported, among other things, the activities of a young Frenchman in London. This was none other than our old friend, the Chevalier de Jars, who had been dismissed from the Queen's service after the scandalous episode in the garden at Amiens. He had returned to Court only to be exiled again after the "Day of Dupes." Now he was acting as Chateauneuf's agent in England. On the surface, he was merely a young man of independent means and sporting tastes who played tennis with the King, flirted with the Queen and led a life of harmless frivolity. The only suspicious thing about him was the fact that he received many letters from France which he kept carefully locked up in a desk.

Anxious that the plotters should be taken unawares, Richelieu arranged to strike simultaneously in two places at once. In London, a burglar, hired by the Ambassador, broke into de Jar's house and abstracted the letters from his desk. In France, Chateauneuf, peacefully

writing letters at night, found himself surrounded by a troop of the Cardinal's guards. Without being allowed to touch anything or communicate with his friends, he was rushed off to Angoulême where he was shut in a cell. A large coffer full of letters, found in his private room, was taken to Richelieu.

It was a fine haul. Rubbing his thin hands with delight, the Cardinal turned over most compromising epistles from the Queen of England, the Queen-Mother, Gaston's friend Puylaurens, Holland, Montagu and others. From these letters and those stolen from de Jars it was possible to trace out the whole conspiracy. Briefly, the plan was this: Gaston, with the help of Spain and the Emperor, was to seize the throne, eliminating Louis and the Cardinal, Chateauneuf was to be Minister of State, Holland, English Ambassador to Paris, and de Jars, French Ambassador to the Court of St. James. Marie de Medici would return to France. Puylaurens was to be Gaston's right-hand man, and political favors were promised to all their friends. Marie, as usual, did not figure in the profits. She liked the fun of pulling chestnuts out of the fire and was content to let her friends eat them.

Richelieu gloated over these compromising documents but there was one bundle of sixty-two letters which he found less satisfactory. In fact the pleasure he got from reading them might be called negligible. They were from Marie de Chevreuse to Chateauneuf and proved bitter reading to His Eminence. They

showed, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that she had been fooling him all the time.

In them he saw Chateauneuf as the favored suitor and himself the poor, pitiful dupe, held up to the ridicule of his rival.

It is difficult to see why Richelieu did not destroy these embarrassing documents. They had little evidential value and were infinitely damaging to his own prestige. On the other hand, he may have kept them as a weapon to hold over the head of Marie herself. From whatever cause, the Cardinal preserved the letters carefully, and they are still among the archives of France. But it is worth noting, in this connection, that Chateauneuf was never brought to trial.

Richelieu cannot be blamed for shrinking from putting such letters in evidence. A Cardinal in the rôle of impassioned lover is bad enough, even in an era when the "celibacy" of the clergy was a standing joke. In these letters he appears in the more unfavorable light of an unsuccessful lover forcing a complacent husband to plead for him. Using the immense prestige of his office, he had frightened the egregious Chevreuse into acting as procurer and tried to adorn the elegant Duke with a pair of horns fitted by the gentleman himself.

The letters are too long to quote in full but a few extracts will explain the humor of the situation.

". . . Monsieur de Chevreuse has had a little quarrel with me. He has been so intimidated by the insolence of the Cardinal that he wishes to persecute me into a base endurance of him."

". . . The Cardinal storms and rages because I do not go to see him. I have written him twice compliments of which he is unworthy, and which I should never have offered had it not been for the persecution of Monsieur de Chevreuse, who said that they would purchase my peace."

". . . The Cardinal said to my husband that my caprices were unsupportable to a man of his temper and that he has resolved no longer to pay me any special attention, since I am incapable of giving my friendship and confidence to him alone."

There is something humorous in this picture of the stately Cardinal complaining petulantly to Chevreuse because his wife would not succumb to his wooing. Evidently he did, for a short time, withdraw his "special attention," in an attempt to bring the lady to heel. She writes: "I have had no news from the Cardinal. If he is as satisfied with not hearing from me as I am at not hearing from him, he is well-pleased and I am freed from that persecution from which may time and our good angel deliver me."

This letter, one fears, was written solely for the edification of Chateauneuf. Undoubtedly the minx was being "persecuted," but she would have been aghast if the Cardinal had given up the attack. The more ardently he persecuted her, the better she liked it. So long as he was raving and storming, he was, in his official capacity, no danger to the conspirators, and he was kept very close to heel during those critical months.

Cleverly calculated to arouse Chateauneuf's jealousy and keep him hostile towards his former master, the letters also assure him repeatedly that he is the favored suitor whose loyalty will receive its reward. "If you are as devoted a servant in deeds as you are in words, I will be a more grateful mistress in actions than in language."

One letter is particularly interesting in view of future events. She wrote "Though all the world should neglect you, I will continue to esteem you so highly through my whole life that, if you love me as truly as you have said, you will have every reason to be content with your fortune. For all the powers of earth cannot make me change my resolution. I swear this to you and command you to believe it and love me faithfully."

There were black times ahead for all the conspirators and Chateauneuf, "neglected by the world," languished in his prison for many long years. During all that time Marie, herself, was helpless to save him, but she never forgot her solemn promise. At the first opportunity, she set herself to gain his release and reinstatement. When she found herself blocked by the whole machinery of the State, she cheerfully upset it and plunged France into civil war to gain her end. Seventeen years after his fall, Chateauneuf, through her efforts, found himself again the Keeper of the Seals. In the face of danger and disgrace, Marie kept her promise and proved her unshakable loyalty.

CHAPTER X

RICHELIEU'S tigerish pounce on Chateauneuf was characteristic. So too was the simultaneous theft of de Jars' letters in London. By a lightning stroke he had secured evidence of the conspiracy and was in a position to take swift vengeance on the plotters. The normal sequel would be a trial of Chateauneuf by a specially appointed commission with conviction a foregone conclusion. Then the block, the flash of the axe and oblivion.

The guilty plotters prepared for the worst and waited with what fortitude they could muster for the Cardinal's next move. To their astonishment nothing happened. Richelieu was not running true to form and gradually apprehension gave way to bewilderment. As a matter of fact, the great man, for perhaps the first time in his public life, was vacillating. The statesman stepped on the accelerator, the natural man put on the emergency brake; the engine, inevitably, stalled. Richelieu's motives, mixed as they were, baffled his contemporaries. In the light of recent research, they are easy to read.

Lonely, isolated on his lofty pinnacle, the Cardinal could astonish his friends by the magnificence of his favors; but his desire for revenge on his

enemies was equally unmeasured. Anne had laughed and danced with joy at the prospect of his death. Now, with every nerve and fibre of his being he wanted to make her suffer, and this conspiracy put a weapon in his hand, if he could only find the hilt. Chateauneuf was in his grip and could be dealt with at any time. Richelieu was after bigger game.

Another complication was introduced by his infatuation for the intriguing Duchess de Chevreuse. He knew only too well that she had been playing with him, but hope still lingered in his embittered heart. Attempts to win her by legitimate methods had failed. So had his efforts to apply pressure through the complacent husband. Now he would try to break her resistance by a species of modified blackmail. Chateauneuf was at his mercy; her letters were in his possession and her beloved Anne was in grave jeopardy.

Richelieu held a strong hand but Marie had the ace of trumps. She knew, as he did not, that there was no shred of evidence against the Queen. Her friends had protected her against herself. There were no letters from her, no mention of her in any other documents, no proof of any sort that she had been involved in the conspiracy. With this knowledge up her sleeve, Marie could afford to laugh at the Cardinal's worst threats; but the position of Chateauneuf was very precarious. She had to tread, like Agag, very delicately. Open advocacy would only make the jealous Richelieu more eager for vengeance. Uncompromising refusal of the Cardinal's amorous offers would antagonize him. She could only keep him at bay

by deferring the surrender he so ardently desired from day to day, without allowing him to give up hope.

The Cardinal realized that the ace of trumps was missing from his hand and tried to remedy the defect. Lacking documentary evidence, testimony from other conspirators would satisfy him. He decoyed de Jars back to France by highly unethical methods and then flung him into one of the lowest dungeons of the Bastille. His trusted officers were ordered to get the desired testimony by any means, and the long martyrdom of Chateauneuf and de Jars began.

Chateauneuf, in the fortress of Angoulême, annoyed his questioners by laughing at the whole affair. He admitted that he was always too fond of women and that his passion for the Duchess had caused him to neglect his official duties. Beyond that, he assured them, he was innocent of any crime against the State. Asked about his share in the conspiracy, he referred to it as being "just women's nonsense and silly talk" and treated it as a harmless diversion indulged in by idle ladies to pass the time. Finally the questioners gave him up in disgust and left him to rot or die, as best suited him. He was never given an opportunity to prove his innocence or confess his guilt before a tribunal. No doubt the Cardinal was afraid that the letters would become public. He contented himself with drawing up a careful "Testimony against the Sieur de Chateauneuf" which was found among his papers after his death. It runs, in part:

"Monsieur de Chateauneuf was made Keeper of the Seals in the belief that he would be guided solely by the commands of the King and the interests of his service, as he had hitherto seemed to have no other design, and had been for many years attached to the Cardinal, serving him with many tokens of affection and fidelity—he attached himself to the cabals of the Court and particularly to those of factious women headed by Madame de Chevreuse whose conduct had often displeased the King, inasmuch as she not only belonged to all the troublesome factions raised against him but had formerly been the very dangerous leader of a party."

Leaving Chateauneuf to convalesce after his "questioning," the Cardinal's inquisitors now concentrated on the gallant young Chevalier de Jars. After a few months, his friends would never have recognized in the tattered, tortured, grey-haired scarecrow of the Bastille the debonair young courtier who played tennis with the King of England and pleased Henriette Marie with his well-turned compliments. In a fetid dungeon where rats rustled in the sodden straw and no ray of light entered to divide night from day, he lay for weary months until his clothes rotted off his back and his nails grew into curved talons.

Eighty times he was brought up into the light of day and "questioned." Eighty times, weak with agony, but proud in the knowledge that no word had passed his lips, he was thrown back into his cell to regain a little strength.

Marie implored King Charles to intercede for the prisoner and Richelieu was bombarded with pleas for mercy from all sides but he held stubbornly to his course. He wanted the evidence that he felt sure de Jars could give, and was going to get it if human ingenuity and the torture chambers of the Bastille could do it.

For nearly a year the wretched victim starved and shivered in his subterranean cell, or endured the unspeakable agony of the torture. Then his questioners admitted defeat and Richelieu made one final effort. De Jars was taken to Troyes, tried by one of the Cardinal's pet "special commissions" and sentenced to death.

It was expected that the victim, faced with death, would weaken and make the much-needed confession. Richelieu, it was obvious, had never spent months in a dark cell or faced the rack and thumb-screw. When de Jars filled his lungs with the sweet open air, felt the keen edge of the axe that would, with a single stroke, put an end to his long agony, he laughed.

Too crippled to walk, he was carried up onto the scaffold and put his head joyfully down on the block. He was waiting, with closed eyes, for the merciful blow, when there was a commotion in the crowd. An officer in the uniform of the Cardinal's Guards dashed through, waving a paper aloft and calling to the executioner to hold his hand. He was bringing a royal pardon. It was a dramatic scene, and one much in vogue with romantic novelists. Richelieu, who fancied himself as a

playwright and had a sense of "good theatre," had planned it himself.

Bewildered and, to tell the truth, a little disappointed, de Jars was helped down from his lofty perch and taken back to the Bastille. This time, however, he was not returned to his loathsome cell. He found himself in comfortable quarters in one of the towers, properly fed, kindly treated and allowed to see his friends. There he was left to recover his health and to regain the use of his limbs, paralyzed by rheumatism and prolonged torture.

Richelieu made a laconic entry in his diary that the Chevalier "was condemned to death for the part he took in the cabals in England and for having negotiated for the Queen-Mother and Gaston to go there, but His Majesty pardoned him and commuted the sentence to perpetual imprisonment."

During all this time, Marie remained at Court, engaged in a desperate battle of wits with the Cardinal. She was playing for her own safety and the lives of her friends against a pitiless antagonist who held most of the cards. He had all the machinery of Church and State, the whole-hearted support of the throne and his own excellent brain. She had only her beauty and her ingenuity, but they stood her in good stead.

By their means, she kept the Cardinal so befuddled with the fumes of balked passion that his judgment was not at its best. Some concessions she did make. In exchange for clemency to her imprisoned

friends, she brought the infatuated Duke Charles of Lorraine to Paris again and patched up a peace which gave Richelieu a breathing space. Further than that she refused to go, but refused so tactfully, so inconclusively, that her decision never seemed quite final. Later, studying the situation in retrospect, Richelieu remarked in his diary that she used her "potent beauty" so skilfully that she was "never lowered by base concessions." In this dilemma, surrender to Richelieu might have bought her peace, security and unlimited power. Marie was quite incapable of making that surrender. She would give herself, in the most casual way, to any handsome man who appealed to her but she was physically, mentally and morally unable to yield to anyone, even the omnipotent Cardinal, for the sake of gaining some material advantage from her surrender. It would have put her, in her own estimation, on the level of a common prostitute.

For months Marie and His Eminence played "cat-and-mouse," and the rôles were, apparently, interchangeable. He could never escape far from her magnetic spell but must always come back to her again. She, in another sense, was never allowed to escape from his constant vigilance. He hesitated to put her in prison but he was particularly anxious to keep her in France. There, at least, he could keep an eye on her. Once over the border, heaven alone knew what mischief she would be up to.

So the long duel went on until the end of that year, 1633. Then Richelieu gave up hope and was obliged to accede to the King's querulous demands that

she should be dismissed from Court. She was requested to retire to the country but was put under no restrictions as to residence. When the day of her departure came, the prospect of losing her gay, vivid presence, cast a general gloom over the Court, and the King found additional cause for annoyance. First Anne, weeping and lamenting, pestered him for permission to say farewell to her favorite and, by sheer persistence, won a grudging consent. While still inwardly seething with irritation, His Majesty was obliged to deal with another suppliant. The Cardinal himself indicated that he wished to see Madame before she left for the outer darkness of the provinces. In the State archives is a letter from Louis which is characteristic of him:

"You ask me if you may see Madame de Chevreuse, who wishes to bid you farewell. You know very well what pleasure the Queen has given me by asking to take leave of her. I know that her visit cannot serve your interests. You know very well that it will not be agreeable to me. That said, do as you will."

There is no record of the interview, but it is a known fact that he remained on very friendly terms with the lady of his heart during her banishment from Court. Love and policy combined to dictate a conciliatory attitude: He was on the verge of a European War and could not concentrate on it unless the tireless intriguer were inactive.

Marie took her leave of the disconsolate Anne, after arranging for secret correspondence, and made her way to her old home at Couzieres, her father's

chateau near Tours. There, we may gather, she felt herself *de trop*. In place of the courtesan, Louise Roger, who had queened it at the chateau during her girlhood, she found a black-haired, full-bosomed, white-skinned houri, who was her new step-mother.

The old Duke de Montbazon had been a widower for twenty-one years, although he had not lacked consolation during that period. He had loved widely and well but eventually tired of the fleeting nature of his casual amours. Now, in the autumn of his full life, he decided to take unto himself another wife and fell a victim to the ravishing charms of the eighteen-year-old Marie d'Auverjour de Bretagne.

Like many young ladies of quality in those troublous times, she was living in a convent where, with other girls of her own class, she was being initiated into the politer branches of learning. Marie de Bretagne evidently learned many lessons at the convent that were not mentioned in the curriculum. Among other things, she learned to judge a man and was not dismayed by grey hairs. The Duke's impetuous wooing was warranted to make anyone forget them. He rode rough-shod through all convent regulations, defied the conventions, took the girl's breath away with his whirlwind attack and capped the climax by eloping with his beauty. He married her out of hand and retired to Couzieres where he could enjoy his honeymoon without the distractions of Paris.

Giving her incorrigible father her filial blessing, and establishing friendly relations with the step-

mother who was only two years older than her own son, Marie betook herself to her own chateau at Dampierre.

This arrangement suited her infinitely better. Marie had no idea of devoting the remainder of her life to gardening or some such innocuous pursuit. She intended to see Anne as often as she wished, and Dampierre was within easy reach of Paris.

Her agile brain was already busy with schemes which boded no good to the harassed Cardinal, and Dampierre was an admirable base for operations. Unfortunately, Richelieu, warned by recent events, was very much on the alert. That wily soul was not to be caught napping twice, and he was having every move of the Queen watched by his spies.

It was reported that she was making frequent expeditions to her favorite convent of Val de Grace and the worldly-minded cleric found this sudden access of piety suspicious. The watch was redoubled and in due course his spies reported that a young man, cloaked and with hat pulled far down over his face, was seen to enter the discreet portals on several occasions when the Queen was "in retreat."

Richelieu chuckled when he heard this damaging news. At last the supercilious Spaniard had delivered herself into his hands. He felt that he now had the makings of a scandal which would finally destroy her in Louis' eyes. All a-thrill with anticipation, the Cardinal made a sudden descent on the convent, demanded entrance by virtue of his ecclesiastical dignity and swept into

the Queen's presence. To his unbounded disgust and disappointment, he found that the mysterious young man was none other than Marie de Chevreuse.

He had missed the big game he was hunting but at least he had found Madame de Chevreuse in Paris, contrary to the express orders of the King. Immediately he took steps to prevent a recurrence of her offence.

Without warning, a closed carriage, surrounded by a guard of musketeers, appeared in the courtyard at Dampierre. The officer in charge informed the Duchess, politely but firmly, that she must accompany them to an unspecified destination. Caught unprepared, Marie was helpless.

She smiled graciously at the officer, collected a few necessary trifles and took her seat in the coach. Surrounded by the guard, it drove off and ultimately arrived at the Chateau de Milly near Tours. Here she was requested to remain until further orders. The guard was withdrawn and she was left to her own devices. The Cardinal had planned the move as a warning rather than as a punishment. All he wanted was peace and hoped that Madame would take the hint. Her immediate retort was to buy a house in Tours and move into the city. An isolated chateau like Milly, dreaming in the silence of the countryside, would have driven her to desperation. Tours, while only a provincial city, had at least the hum and bustle of life and was the centre of what society the province afforded.

Richelieu heard of her move, but ignored it. He merely told the old Archbishop of Tours to keep an eye on the lady and hoped for the best. He was prepared to conciliate the "dangerous spirit" who had caused him so much anxiety. He wrote to her in a most pacific strain and assured her of his constant friendship. He even used his influence in the courts to secure for her an independent property settlement. By the terms of the marriage contract, her estates and properties had been handed over to Chevreuse, but that nobleman had been playing ducks and drakes with the enormous fortune she had inherited from her first husband, de Luynes. Chevreuse was insanely extravagant and appeared to have no sense of the value of money. If he wanted a coach he would have fifteen built, try them all and select the most comfortable. The remaining fourteen would be abandoned as useless. After mortgaging his own immense estate to the hilt, he had spent Marie's money with both hands and she had been obliged to put a stop to it, if only to protect the interests of her son, Louis Albert de Luynes.

Richelieu's aid in the matter was offered and accepted "without prejudice" in the legal sense. She knew that it was merely an olive branch, a plea for peace. Marie was bent on war. As long as the Cardinal was the enemy of Anne, just so long would she fight him tooth and nail. She spent four years at Tours and during all that time she was planning, with the infinite care and subtlety that distinguished her, yet another vast cabal against the Cardinal.

Her time was not all taken up in conspiracy. To be more exact, she spiced conspiracy with love. De Retz, in his memoirs, says: "She loved without selection, purely because she had to love somebody. Her devotion to her passion, which might be called eternal, though its object changed, did not prevent her from being led astray now and then by passing whims, but she always came back from these distractions with an ardor which made them appear delightful."

The witty Frenchman makes a subtle distinction between affairs sufficiently interesting to be called passions and the little casual episodes that served to while away a dull hour. The episode with Buckingham, for example, had no effect on her deeper feeling for Holland. At Tours her love affairs covered an astonishingly wide range. Even in that dull provincial town she contrived to find diversion and set the tongues of the gossips wagging merrily. Her first victim was none other than the aged Archbishop himself.

He had officiated at her first marriage to the Duke de Luynes and was friendly towards her father. This elderly attitude did not continue long. Told by his ecclesiastical superior to keep an eye on the intriguing Duchess, he did it—thoroughly. If the clerical optic rested with unseemly warmth on the distracting curve of bosom displayed by the generous fashions of the day, who shall blame him? Partly from pure love of mischief, partly with a canny eye on the future, Marie completely won his octogenarian heart and set his feeble pulse beating at an unaccustomed rate.

Tying the tonsured scalp to her belt, the gay Duchess went on the warpath again. Her next victim was the very young Count (later Duke) de la Rochefoucauld, whose sardonic memoirs and essays give little hint of his ardent youth. The Count had large estates in the neighborhood and often left the gaiety of Paris for the sports and diversions of the country. At Tours he came to pay his respects to the exiled Duchess and fell under her spell. He was promptly pressed into service as a messenger between his lady-love and the Queen, and was very useful in that capacity. His rank and popularity at Court put him above suspicion.

The suave and dapper Montagu now appeared on the scene, renewed his vows and offered his services. He was accompanied on one visit by a young Englishman named Craft, a stripling who was making the Grand Tour. He has no further place in this story but he illustrates the magnetism exerted by Marie over every man who fell under the spell of those glorious eyes.

Young Craft only saw her for a few days, and then in company with Montagu, who was her lover. It is doubtful if the lad was allowed to do more than kiss her hand, but he was completely infatuated with this woman who was over thirty and had a son almost his own age. After his return to England he wrote letters that are aflame with young love. "I often see your picture and kiss it . . . My heart and soul are both yours utterly . . . my passion for you is greater than I can express . . . I dread my own country for I can never hope to see anything that will bring me content-

ment. . . . I will never love anyone but you and that with all my heart and soul and all my life long."

Marie was under close espionage during her four years in Tours, 1633-1637, but the spies saw nothing in her actions that was in the least suspicious. With a wry smile, Richelieu read of her outrageous assault on the ancient but amorous Archbishop, her affair with Rochefoucauld and the generous hospitality extended to Montagu and his travelling companion, but found nothing to which he, officially, could take exception. Meanwhile, under his very nose, Marie was building up her greatest cabal. Montagu was her liaison officer with England and she had active friends at the English embassy in Paris. Rochefoucauld was one of her messengers but she was not dependent on him. Between Paris and Tours flowed a constant stream of letters, carried by the most unexpected people. They all went to La Porte, still the Queen's devoted servant, who decoded them and sent them on to their destinations. Her postal system was international in scope, and the lines ran from Madrid, Brussels, Milan, Savoy, London and Lorraine.

Vast as was the range of her activities, she moved with absolute assurance through the intricacies of the plan. Every step was thought out, every link in the chain tested carefully. As the great web of intrigue was extended to draw in more and more conspirators, the utmost discretion prevailed. Three times a plan, perfect in theory, had been ruined by indiscretion on the part of some of the plotters. This time Marie impressed on everyone concerned the absolute necessity of secrecy. Every

letter was written in code. Nothing was put in writing which could, of itself, supply any vital information.

It was the game dearest to her intriguing heart, and Marie played it to the utmost. The fact that Richelieu's spies watched her every move gave an added fillip to life. Figuratively speaking, she thumbed her aristocratic little nose at the watchful Cardinal and went her way rejoicing.

Richelieu should not be blamed for his ignorance of her subterranean activities. He was in the awkward position of a man trying to keep his eye on a three-ring circus. One ring was Marie de Chevreuse at Tours, one was a full-dress European War, with France in a precarious position. The third, and most distressing, was a situation which had developed at Court, with the chaste Louis in love for the first time.

CHAPTER XI

VAST tomes have been written about the Thirty Years' War without piercing the fog which, to the average reader, enshrouds that famous European melée. War was being waged on a dozen fronts in as many different causes. The Netherlands was in revolt against Spain; Wallenstein marched down "The Priests' Lane"; Tilly struck terror into German hearts and the name of John of Werth was a bogey to frighten French babies for generations. Van Tromp put a broom at his mast-head and swept the English Channel. Through the welter of conflict and politics, Richelieu raised troops, directed operations, achieved triumphs, suffered reverses, played both ends against the middle and, by some marvel, maintained his political equilibrium.

He was at that time Foreign Minister, Home Secretary, Minister of War, Minister of Marine, Minister of Trade and Commerce, and Minister of Public Worship and Instruction. Not content with being six little Cabinet Ministers rolled into one, he must needs try to be a dozen little generals. Jealous as any Mussolini of his authority, he tried to direct every military operation from Paris and carefully appointed two generals to each army. The inevitable quarrels kept any one man from becoming too powerful a rival.

Weighed down by the incredible volume of work, carrying the fate of France on his stooped shoulders, Richelieu overlooked the trouble brewing at Tours. He thought that Marie de Chevreuse, at least, was off his mind. It was of a piece with his ill fortune that another beauteous blonde, nearer at hand, should have given him some of the most anxious moments of his career. Marie de Medici and Marie de Chevreuse had, alternately and simultaneously, given him cause to curse the entire sex. Now there appeared yet a third Marie destined to give him many a sleepless night. This was Marie de Hautefort, the golden-haired beauty of the Court.

At the time of Louis' serious illness at Lyons three years before, his lack-lustre eye fell on a girl of fourteen, who had recently become one of Marie de Medici's maids-of-honor. He promptly recovered, in spite of the well-meant efforts of his physicians. Even at that early age, Marie de Hautefort was warranted to galvanize the most moribund man into life. Great blue eyes sparkled and danced, a roguish smile revealed perfect teeth and ready blushes brought a glow to her creamy complexion. The mop of golden curls that formed an aureole around the dainty head, her air of dewy freshness and innocent gaiety, earned the name by which she was known at Court, l'Aurore, Goddess of Dawn.

Louis' interest in the girl did not escape the observant eye of the old Queen, who was quick to take advantage of it. To quote Madame de Motteville, "As soon as the King saw her, he had an inclination for

her. The Queen-Mother, to whom she had been given as maid-of-honor, seeing this little spark of fire in the soul of a Prince so shy of women, tried to light rather than extinguish it, in order to gain his good graces by her compliance." Using as bait the beauty and virginity of a girl of fourteen committed to her care, Marie de Medici tried to bring her son under her control but the "Day of Dupes" put an end to her hopes of ruling France.

Louis then gave Marie de Hautefort to his wife with the request that she "like her and treat her well for his sake." It was not the type of request that a wife receives with enthusiasm, and Anne was quite prepared to dislike her new maid-of-honor. Marie de Hautefort, however, proved anything but an adventuress with designs on the royal bed. With the unthinking ardor of youth, the girl enrolled herself under the Queen's banner and joined that gallant little band of comrades, headed by Marie de Chevreuse, who had devoted themselves to the cause of the "martyred" Anne.

Under the circumstances, Marie de Hautefort found the dogged devotion of the inarticulate King merely annoying. His advances were met with gay indifference and his eccentricities held up to the ridicule of the Queen's circle.

To do him justice, Louis does not appear to have had any designs on the girl's virtue. He merely wanted a friend in whom he could confide. He came nightly to his wife's apartments to talk to the object of his platonic affections. It was noticed with some amusement that he was always careful to sit at a safe distance

from her during these conversations. Marie de Hautefort herself told a friend that he talked about nothing but hunting and dogs. The innocence of his wooing was only equalled by its surpassing dulness.

Sometimes the evenings were less placid. If Louis ever dared to criticize his wife to the maid-of-honor, he would be treated to a blast of polite abuse for his treatment of her. Worsted in the battle of words the King would retire and tell his troubles to the sympathetic Richelieu.

The Cardinal had at first paid court to the new favorite. He realized that the King's favor made her a potential power at Court and wanted her on his side. Marie de Hautefort, however, rejected his overtures and abused him roundly for his "disgraceful treatment" of the Queen. Finding her aligned with his enemies, Richelieu resolved to drive her from Court.

He had in his pay a certain Mademoiselle de Chemerault, who was one of the maids-of-honor. This lady wrote exhaustive accounts of everything that went on in the Queen's apartments, and her reports are still in existence. They give a vivid picture of the private life of Anne and record the somewhat ribald conversations that enlivened the hours. The celibate King was the butt of most of their jests and Marie de Hautefort was foremost in provoking laughter at his expense.

With a deference that thinly veiled his satisfaction, Richelieu would lay these reports before the King. They were bitter reading but Louis could not bring himself to dismiss the girl who had won his affec-

her. The Queen-Mother, to whom she had been given as maid-of-honor, seeing this little spark of fire in the soul of a Prince so shy of women, tried to light rather than extinguish it, in order to gain his good graces by her compliance." Using as bait the beauty and virginity of a girl of fourteen committed to her care, Marie de Medici tried to bring her son under her control but the "Day of Dupes" put an end to her hopes of ruling France.

Louis then gave Marie de Hautefort to his wife with the request that she "like her and treat her well for his sake." It was not the type of request that a wife receives with enthusiasm, and Anne was quite prepared to dislike her new maid-of-honor. Marie de Hautefort, however, proved anything but an adventuress with designs on the royal bed. With the unthinking ardor of youth, the girl enrolled herself under the Queen's banner and joined that gallant little band of comrades, headed by Marie de Chevreuse, who had devoted themselves to the cause of the "martyred" Anne.

Under the circumstances, Marie de Hautefort found the dogged devotion of the inarticulate King merely annoying. His advances were met with gay indifference and his eccentricities held up to the ridicule of the Queen's circle.

To do him justice, Louis does not appear to have had any designs on the girl's virtue. He merely wanted a friend in whom he could confide. He came nightly to his wife's apartments to talk to the object of his platonic affections. It was noticed with some amusement that he was always careful to sit at a safe distance

from her during these conversations. Marie de Hautefort herself told a friend that he talked about nothing but hunting and dogs. The innocence of his wooing was only equalled by its surpassing dulness.

Sometimes the evenings were less placid. If Louis ever dared to criticize his wife to the maid-of-honor, he would be treated to a blast of polite abuse for his treatment of her. Worsted in the battle of words the King would retire and tell his troubles to the sympathetic Richelieu.

The Cardinal had at first paid court to the new favorite. He realized that the King's favor made her a potential power at Court and wanted her on his side. Marie de Hautefort, however, rejected his overtures and abused him roundly for his "disgraceful treatment" of the Queen. Finding her aligned with his enemies, Richelieu resolved to drive her from Court.

He had in his pay a certain Mademoiselle de Chemerault, who was one of the maids-of-honor. This lady wrote exhaustive accounts of everything that went on in the Queen's apartments, and her reports are still in existence. They give a vivid picture of the private life of Anne and record the somewhat ribald conversations that enlivened the hours. The celibate King was the butt of most of their jests and Marie de Hautefort was foremost in provoking laughter at his expense.

With a deference that thinly veiled his satisfaction, Richelieu would lay these reports before the King. They were bitter reading but Louis could not bring himself to dismiss the girl who had won his affec-

tion. At a loss to understand such feebleness, Richelieu would rail at him for showing such forbearance towards the flightly little baggage.

Caught between two fires, Louis had no peace. On one side was Richelieu, nagging because he did not dismiss Marie de Hautefort from Court. On the other was Marie herself, quarrelling with him because he allowed the Cardinal to bully the Queen. Weary of the struggle, the King fled to the peace of his hunting lodge at St. Germains.

There he lived like a private gentleman, pottering about in his garden, training his beloved magpies and composing doleful songs. Madame de Motteville paints the picture of the melancholy recluse ". . . without Suite, without Court, without power, pleasure or love. While his armies were taking cities or fighting battles, he was amusing himself with snaring birds. . . ."

At times the King would emerge from his retreat and appear at Court with some vague idea of asserting his authority. These visits usually ended in a pitched battle with Richelieu, who was in no mood to accept hindrance or criticism. Louis would shamble off in search of Marie de Hautefort and pour out his grievances. He found her a most charming *confidante*. Criticism of the hated Cardinal was music in her ears and she paid for it with smiles that raised him to the seventh heaven of delight. Quick to realize that abuse of the Minister was a sure road to the King's favor, the courtiers joined in the chorus and assured Louis that he was the victim of an intolerable tyranny. No wonder Richelieu wrote in his

diary: "It is easier to control the battlefields of Europe than the four square yards of His Majesty's study."

Since direct methods had failed to drive Marie de Hautefort from her place in the King's affection, Richelieu decided to supply a counter-attraction. More by good luck than good management he found the demurely lovely Louise de la Fayette with whom Louis fell genuinely in love. Since Louise was the niece of Father Joseph, Richelieu assumed as a matter of course that she would be a partisan of his own. Once again his inability to understand or handle women betrayed him.

Louise was a gentle, saintly soul who had come to Paris in order to enter a convent. The loneliness and unhappiness of the puppet King aroused a fierce tenderness in her and she became his champion against the all-powerful Cardinal. The rather clumsy efforts of Richelieu to bribe her by promises of money and prestige antagonized her and she threw all her influence against him. Much as she loved Louis, her religious convictions were outraged by his domestic affairs. She saw something tragic and sinful in the conflict between mother and son, between husband and wife. Once made aware, thanks to the hints of Richelieu, of her power over the King, she began to use it according to her lights.

Richelieu realized too late that he had jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire. He had eliminated Marie de Hautefort merely because she was a partisan of the Queen. In her place he had put a woman who was striking at the very foundation of his policy. Louise was trying to reconcile Louis to Anne, and to bring

back to Court that mother of all adversity, Marie de Medici. Worst of all, she was actually urging Louis to make peace with Spain.

In a panic the Cardinal called on all the vast, unseen resources of the Church. Louise's confessor reminded her of her vocation for the convent. The King's spiritual adviser warned him of the grave temptations of the flesh and painted an alarming picture of the fate that awaited adulterers. Louis had not sinned yet. He had only got as far as writing to Louise, offering her a little house at Versailles where she could retire from the Court and "live for him alone."

That letter convinced Louise that her immortal soul was in danger. Two days later the great gates of the Convent de la Visitation clanged shut behind her. Behind those grey walls lived and died, as Soeur Angelique, the woman beloved by the King.

Safe behind her grill, Louise continued her propaganda, ably assisted by the King's confessor, Père Caussin. Louis would visit her daily, holding long, intimate conversations through the unkind bars. On his return to the Louvre, he would prove more than usually difficult to handle. Hours of argument would follow, with the irresistible will of Richelieu in collision with the immovable obstinacy of the King. After these battles Louis usually retired to his room and threw himself on his bed in tears, like a Victorian maiden. His gentlemen would gather around sympathetically while the King railed peevishly at the domineering Richelieu. Then each

in turn would hurry off to the Cardinal to repeat what Louis had said.

The whole Louvre was a vast network of espionage which made conversation more dangerous than open crime. Spies about the King, spies about the Queen, spies in every department of government, garnered their scraps of information and reported to Father Joseph. The "Grey Cardinal" sifted and sorted, selected what items seemed important and brought the result to his Master. Richelieu was thus enabled to keep his finger on the pulse of opinion. He knew his friends and his enemies, what dangers threatened and when to strike.

The growing dislike of the King constituted a threat to his prestige, but for the time being he must ignore it. Another danger threatened, which called for immediate action. Word had come from Tours and, with a groan, Richelieu realized that Marie de Chevreuse was once again on the warpath.

He had known, or suspected, that Anne and the Duchess were in constant communication but had been too occupied to take measures to prevent it. With long immunity, the Queen had become careless. Just at this time, Louis himself stumbled on something that aroused his suspicions. He wrote angrily to Richelieu: "I found in the Queen's apartments a certain Plainville who goes to and from Madame de Chevreuse, and was welcomed to the Queen's presence like a messiah." It was confirmation of certain other facts filed away in that discreet little room of Father Joseph's. La Porte, the

Queen's servant, had been scurrying about with an air of vast importance and spent much of his time at the Hôtel de Chevreuse. The Queen herself had been apparently inactive but she was in the habit of going into retreat at the Convent of Val de Grace with a frequency surprising in anyone but a religious devotee. Father Joseph put two and two together again, added it up to five and reported the answer to his superior. Then Richelieu pounced.

La Porte, arrested in the street near the Val de Grace, was thrown into the Bastille. Letters were found on him addressed to Marie de Chevreuse and behind a sliding panel at the Hôtel de Chevreuse were more letters with a cipher key. In themselves all these proved to be harmless but they contained vague hints and suspicious references. The next place to be searched was the Val de Grace. Richelieu sent Seguier, the Chancellor, with a strong party, to demand admittance to the hallowed precincts. With them went the Archbishop of Paris, who ordered the Abbess, under pain of excommunication, to give the searchers all assistance and information in her power. The apartments occupied by Anne during her retreats were ransacked but nothing was found.

Seguier pretended to be disappointed but there is little doubt that he had warned the Abbess in advance. When Anne became Regent a few years later, the Chancellor was given an important post in the government. It was a mark of gratitude for services rendered.

Once again Richelieu was faced by a distressing lack of documentary evidence. He had nothing but a few letters, a mass of suspicion and the person of the unfortunate La Porte. Drastic measures were indicated, if he were to make any case against the Queen, but he found himself in a difficulty. Father Caussin took up the cudgels for the prisoner and reproached Richelieu for arresting him without cause. Finding that Louis listened patiently, the intrepid Jesuit went a step further and accused the Cardinal directly of persecuting the Queen because she would not yield to his amorous advances. He told the King "that he did not know how it was possible for the Cardinal to treat the Queen so badly since he had always loved her and still bore her great affection." Richelieu, commenting on this affair in his diary, branded it as "the blackest and most damnable malice capable of entering the mind of a monk" and blamed Anne for starting the story herself. In any case, Caussin overstepped the mark in making the accusation and was shortly afterwards exiled.

The controversy had brought La Porte into such prominence that Richelieu dared not torture him without some definite evidence of crime. La Porte, however, had no way of knowing this. Lying in a dark cell, cut off from the outside world by mighty walls of stone, he waited patiently for the "questioning" that seemed inevitable.

Finally the door was opened to admit Laffemas, the Cardinal's favorite agent, who had dealt with de Jars three years before. He put the prisoner

through a third degree, bullying, bribing, bluffing, questioning. La Porte merely stated, again and again, that he knew nothing. Day after day the performance was repeated, with the same result. Richelieu seethed with impatience and Laffemas urged stronger measures to overcome the obstinacy of the valet.

Then came the day when La Porte was led out of his cell, and we have his own account of what happened: "Laffemas showed me a paper and said, 'Here is an order by which you are sentenced to undergo the ordinary and extraordinary question.' Then he made me descend to the question chamber with Sergeant Labuere, showed me the instruments, and delivered a long lecture on the wedges, cords, etc., exaggerating as much as possible the sufferings they inflicted."

To his eternal credit, La Porte remained silent, and was returned to his cell. A jailer was now put in with him, to make sure that he could neither communicate with the outside world nor escape. For weeks, starved and chilled, he lay in the putrid darkness. Even in the face of the ever-impending torture, his courage never wavered. It remained for Anne, in the safety and luxury of the Louvre, to play the coward.

She was serenely confident that La Porte would never betray her. If she had kept her head, there was nothing to fear, but her weak spirit gave way under pressure. Into her room swept the Cardinal, with his bleak face and piercing eyes. Saying little, suggesting much, he left her with the impression that he knew everything. That first conversation was short but every

word was a covert threat. It put the fear of God into a woman whose conscience was anything but clear.

Left to herself, Anne fell into a state of blind panic and made a fatal mistake. She sent for her confessor and asked him to celebrate the Mass. After receiving the sacrament, she swore solemnly, by it, that she had written only to Madame de Chevreuse and that the letters were merely friendly notes.

She then sent her confessor to the Cardinal to report what had happened. She had taken the most binding oath possible to a Catholic and committed the blackest perjury in the process. To her superstitious mind, it seemed impossible that any normal person could doubt her. Richelieu merely smiled triumphantly. To him the whole performance was a confession of weakness and a proof of her guilt.

Back again he came, awe-inspiring in his scarlet robes, terrifying in his ruthlessness. Dropping all pretence of humility in the presence of royalty, he towered over the frightened woman like an inexorable judge. Beaten down by his dominating personality, Anne lost her head completely. Neither lies nor evasions saved her. Mercilessly he put her through a cross-examination, pouncing on every admission, forcing the truth from her reluctant lips.

At first she swore a sacred oath that she had never written to anyone abroad. "Come, come, Madame," he said impatiently, "the truth, please." Then she admitted that she had written to her brother, the Cardinal-Infant in Brussels, to inquire about his

health. "Enough of this trifling, Madame. I asked for the truth." As the gruelling examination went on, Anne admitted more and more. She confessed having written to her brother, Phillip of Spain, to Queen Henriette Marie of England, and to the Queen-Mother in Brussels.

Finally Richelieu threatened to go to the King with the damaging knowledge he held. At that, Anne's last vestige of courage failed. Flinging herself on her knees, before the implacable Cardinal, she implored him, in a voice broken by sobs, to protect her from the anger of her husband. She wept, pleaded, promised anything, offered everything. She even seized his hand and kissed it fervently.

In Richelieu's own account of the scene, he says that he "drew his hand away in a firm manner." He does not tell of the thrill of savage triumph that must have gone through him. This proud Spanish jade had spurned him, ridiculed him, worked for his downfall and danced for joy at the prospect of his death. Now she cringed at his feet while he towered over her, the arbiter of her fate. Even the love that she offered he rejected. The beautiful body that housed her cowardly spirit no longer had any charms for him. He wanted power—absolute, unfettered power—and, by the Lord, he had it.

De Retz, writing a few years afterwards, gives us a dramatic picture of that scene and paints the players in a few incisive strokes:

"The Queen detested Richelieu and made him feel it, but he took his revenge at Val de Grace. After the outburst, after the word 'treason' had been

Cardinal Richelieu

(From the painting by Philippe de Champaigne)

Cardinal Richelieu

(From the painting by Philippe de Champaigne)

said, it rested with him to have mercy, or to send the barren Queen into shameless exile. It gave him pleasure to see her cower at his feet, frightened and deprived of all her pride. He exulted in disdaining her with an exaggerated and insulting affectation of respect. He listened complacently while she drove the nails into her own coffin, rendering more proofs of her docility than he could have dared to expect, incriminating herself as she explained in her own way, by palpable untruths, all her treasonable letters to her brothers and her friends in Spain."

There was a vindictive strain in Richelieu. He would have derived some satisfaction from the public disgrace and banishment of the woman who had scorned him for so many years. There was a keener thrill in keeping her at Court, where he could enjoy her daily humiliation. With an impassive face he raised the kneeling woman to her feet and promised to intercede for her with the King. In an ecstasy of emotion, Anne again threw herself on her knees before him, kissing his hand, gasping "O how kind you are; what a good heart you must have."

Again he raised her from her ignominious position, calmed her and resumed his questions. Anne had by now surrendered to blind panic, but she retained a sort of desperate cunning. On some subjects she was voluble, telling, to quote de Retz, "a great deal more than she knew." On others, she protested ignorance. It was all very confusing but the Cardinal was able, out of the welter of lies and evasions, to gather the main outlines

of the conspiracy. Gaston was making another bid for the throne, backed by the money and arms of Spain. The Duke of Lorraine had also promised his support on condition that his fortresses were restored. Marie de Medici and Queen Henriette Marie of England were involved as were Marie de Chevreuse, the Count de Soissons and many other malcontents who had been driven into exile.

The Cardinal finally withdrew in triumph. Once again he had nipped in the bud a dangerous conspiracy conceived and controlled by Marie de Chevreuse. He held all the threads in his hands and could retaliate at his leisure.

CHAPTER XII

AGLOW with triumph, Richelieu left the humiliated Queen. Reviewing the episode later, in the cold light of reason, he was assailed by vague doubts. Was the confession really complete? Was it even remotely possible that Anne had told the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Anne's state of mind was equally unsatisfactory. Once the brain-storm was over, she was aghast at the damaging admissions she had made. She also knew how much she had withheld from her inquisitor. Was he convinced of her entire candor, or would he come back and wring from her those last precious scraps of information? There was only one way to convince Richelieu. La Porte must make a confession that would correspond exactly with her own. It would be regarded as conclusive proof of her own sincerity, and she would be left in peace.

There remained the problem of getting word to La Porte. He was entombed in the depths of the Bastille, cut off from his fellow-prisoners and guarded night and day. It seemed impossible but a way was found, thanks to the courage and ingenuity of the Queen's loyal friends. It will always remain a mystery why this woman, stupid, cowardly, and selfish, should have inspired such

self-sacrificing devotion in others. Of the gallant little band who served her, de Jars and La Porte were in prison, Marie de Chevreuse in exile and the others scattered. In this emergency, another loyal soul came to the rescue and saved the situation.

Early one morning a girl in ragged peasant dress slipped out of the Louvre, climbed into a *fiacre* and drove to the Bastille. With wooden sabots clattering on the cobblestones, she passed through the grim gates and accosted the captain of the guard. The servant of the Chevalier de Jars had sent her with an urgent message, she said, and she must see Monsieur at once.

De Jars was now a privileged prisoner with a room of his own. So crippled as the result of his "questioning" the year before that escape was impossible, he was allowed to have his own servant and could even receive visitors. When the jailer woke him at dawn to tell him that a girl wanted to see him with a message from his servant, the gallant Chevalier was distinctly peevish. Sending word that the messenger could wait, he calmly went to sleep again, while the Queen's fate hung trembling in the balance.

For two agonizing hours the girl sat in the guard room, exposed to the genial brutality of the soldiers. Not even a convincing layer of grime could hide the piquant beauty of her face, and golden curls escaped from under the wide coif she wore. The guards indicated their appreciation of the pretty *grisette* in the approved military manner. They did not suspect that the bashful wench was Marie de Hautefort herself, reigning beauty of the Court and the woman whom the King delighted to honor.

She had already forfeited fame and fortune by her loyalty to Anne. In this mad escapade, she endangered her reputation and what the melodramas describe as that which is "dearer than life." As the slow minutes crept on, her position became more and more precarious. The sun had risen and the streets were filling with citizens going about their daily work. Every moment made it increasingly difficult to return to the Louvre undiscovered, but still Marie sat on, determined to see de Jars.

The horseplay of the soldiers had become alarmingly boisterous when a summons came from de Jars. Marie de Hautefort was almost at the breaking point, but she delivered her message: The Queen was in deadly danger and could only be saved by La Porte. Could de Jars communicate with him?

The Chevalier had endured torture and ascended the scaffold for his Queen, but the most fantastic loyalty has its limits. At first he refused point-blank. He pointed out that what she asked was impossible and that he would only be courting certain destruction by attempting it.

Desperately, Marie pleaded with him. "See what I have risked, Monsieur? Will you fail her?" At last de Jars shrugged his shoulders. "Ah well, there

is no help for it, I suppose. I must do what the Queen demands. I have just escaped from the scaffold. I am about to return to it."

He may have been reluctant to undertake the task. Once having agreed, he devoted all his energy and wit to its accomplishment. La Porte's cell was immediately below his, but two floors down. In the room between were a number of prisoners who had been involved in some riots at Bordeaux. He would have to work through them and stake everything on their silence.

De Jars was still too lame to walk, but a friend, while taking his daily exercise on the parapets, managed to pick up a sharp piece of slate when the guard was not looking. With this poor tool the Chevalier loosened a stone flag in his floor and made an opening into the lower cell. The piece of slate was then handed down to the prisoners below, who, in their turn, made an opening into the dungeon where La Porte lay.

Thus far, all had been plain sailing, but worse difficulties lay ahead. The guard in La Porte's cell left it but once a day. He carried out the soiled straw, which was the only floor covering, and brought back a fresh supply. In that brief interval alone could any messages be passed down. There was always the chance of the guard coming back and finding a note, the danger of one of the intervening prisoners betraying the scheme, the risk of the loose flagstones being found. De Jars carried on and hoped for the best.

One morning La Porte heard a noise above him and saw a note dangling at the end of a

string. It was unsigned and said that a gentleman wished to communicate with him. At first the valet ignored the note, thinking it was one more attempt to trick him into confession. In time, however, he was convinced that the unknown writer was really a friend. Then came another problem. He had no writing materials. How could he send an answer?

If necessity is the mother of invention, adversity is a notorious sharpener of wits. The next morning, when the string was lowered, La Porte triumphantly attached his reply. It was only a few words, scratched on a piece of linen torn from his shirt. He had made ink by mixing charcoal from the brazier with the grease in which his dinner was swimming. His pen was one of the straws that served for a carpet. The note sufficed, however, to assure de Jars that he had really gotten in touch with the Queen's retainer. After that letters were passed down telling La Porte exactly what the Queen had already admitted and ordering him to make a confession to correspond.

The next time that La Porte was brought out for examination he seemed less defiant. His inquisitors felt that the long imprisonment had at last broken down his courage and put him through a strenuous grilling. Gradually, and with a convincing display of reluctance, he made one admission after another. He must have given a very dramatic performance. When he was finally sent back to his cell, Laffemas and his fellows felt confident that they had wrung the last morsel of information out of the broken man.

When his confession was brought to Richelieu he beamed with satisfaction. Here, he felt, were the facts, and all the facts. The Queen had told the truth for once. He could now proceed with the evidence he had collected.

All this had taken time. The Bastille had been built for a fortress and the stones were thick and strong. Days of wearisome scraping were needed to wear away the stone with a piece of flint, days of delay before La Porte could be convinced that all was well, days of nerve-wracking anxiety before his "confession" was heard and accepted. During all this time Anne had lived in an agony of fear. She realized that she was in deadly danger. At a time when France was at war with Spain, she had been in communication with her family in Madrid and the Netherlands. She had betrayed State secrets to the enemy and had committed the even greater crime of conspiring against her lawful husband and his throne.

Richelieu had kept his promise of interceding for her with the King, but there is no evidence of his withholding any of the facts that he had learned. Louis was again contemplating divorce or separation, and vowed that he would publish her treachery before the world as a prelude to shutting her up for life in some fortress. Havre was mentioned, as being both the strongest and the furthest from Spain.

Faced with disgrace and imprisonment, Anne even thought of flight to Brussels where she could put herself under the protection of her brother, the

Cardinal-Infant. Marie de Hautefort, of course, would accompany her. Rochefoucauld, in his memoirs, says that the Queen asked him if he would escort her to the border. "I was young," he writes, "and at an age when a man loves to do extraordinary things. I could conceive of nothing more romantic than to carry off the Queen from the King, her husband, and from the Cardinal who was jealous of her, and Mademoiselle de Hautefort from the King who loved her—at one stroke."

Nothing came of the wild scheme. Perhaps Anne lacked the courage for such a decisive step. Perhaps she realized that flight would put an ignominious end to her career as Queen of France. Marie de Medici had fled with disastrous results. It might be better to wait until the clouds rolled by.

In her terror and distress of mind, Anne was alone except for the young maid-of-honor. Marie de Hautefort was loyalty itself, but the Queen longed for the strength and calm assurance of that other Marie, far away at Tours. The arrest of La Porte had cut all lines of communication, and in desperation Anne turned to Rochefoucauld. She begged him to act as messenger once again and carry a letter to the Duchess de Chevreuse. He refused, with every expression of regret. He confessed that he had been obliged to swear a solemn oath to the Cardinal that he would not carry any letters whatsoever between the Queen and her friend.

He retired to his estates near Tours, leaving Anne completely isolated. The Cardinal now had her at his mercy but he showed great moderation. She re-

mained the Queen, with unimpaired prestige in the public eye, but was forced to sign a full confession of her part in the conspiracy. Holding this damning document over her head, the King and Richelieu now drew up an extraordinary set of rules and regulations to which she was obliged to consent in writing. In effect, she was forbidden to enter any convent without the King's permission. All letters must be written in the presence of two of her ladies-in-waiting who should, if desirable, show them to the King; she was not to write to any foreign country or receive Lord Montagu or any other intermediary. Lastly and most especially, she was never to hold any communication whatsoever with Madame de Chevreuse.

Having imposed on Anne this last humiliation, Richelieu appeared to be satisfied. Leaving the Queen to contemplate her fallen estate and his own magnaminity, he retired majestically to the Palais Cardinal, the mansion which he had built for himself near the Louvre. There he reigned in more than royal state, the acknowledged master of France. The vast palace was a hive of activity. Courtiers and foreign envoys, field marshals and admirals, secretaries and diplomats thronged the spacious rooms. Generals and department heads came to him for orders, princes of the blood waited, hat in hand, for the honor of an interview, and nobles felt exalted if he deigned to notice their existence.

At the Louvre Anne held her small Court, surrounded by spies. His Majesty the King, weary of conflict with the domineering Cardinal, had retired

limply to St. Germains. There he pottered about in his garden and trained his birds. Once or twice a week he would come to Paris to visit his beloved Louise at the convent and then return to his obscurity, unnoticed and unknown. With King and Queen relegated to the background, the Queen-Mother in exile and Gaston on the run, Richelieu reigned supreme. The only fly in the ointment was Marie de Chevreuse.

She was more than an individual problem, she was an international menace. At Tours, with her wings clipped and her activities closely watched, she was comparatively harmless. Footloose in Europe, she would be an incalculable danger. Richelieu wrote in his diary at this time that it was of vital importance to keep this "dangerous spirit" in France. Once out of the country she would "agitate fresh schemes in favor of de Jars and Chateauneuf, and would carry fresh disturbances into affairs which cannot be foreseen."

There was the rub. As a shrewd student of human nature, the Cardinal could foretell with reasonable accuracy what a normal person would do under any given circumstances. Faced by the sublime, single-minded idiocy of Marie de Chevreuse, he admitted himself baffled. She had intrigued for years with the sole idea of making Anne happy and had three times come within an ace of overturning the throne. Ten years before, her intrigues and the fatuous tantrums of Buckingham had caused the Anglo-French war. She was quite capable of starting another, if it would be of any advantage to the Queen.

Richelieu had quite enough trouble on his hands. All Europe was involved in the Thirty Years' War. Only England remained neutral, and the opposed forces were so equal that the intervention of English armies on either side would tip the balance.

England itself was torn between two parties. The Royalists, headed by Henriette Marie and her feeble husband, were hostile to Richelieu and eager for an alliance with Spain. The Puritan party hated ultra-Catholic Spain on religious grounds and opposed Henriette Marie on general principles. Secretly, the Cardinal put many of the Puritan leaders on his pay roll and furnished funds on condition that England was kept out of war. Nevertheless the situation was precarious. He had no desire to have it complicated by the presence in England of such a firebrand as Marie de Chevreuse.

By imprisoning the Duchess, he would have solved many of his problems. Such a step might, on the other hand, precipitate the very crisis he feared. Marie had many influential friends in England and had made an indelible impression on the heart of King Charles. Henriette Marie had been her partner in the last three plots and the House of Guise-Lorraine, to which Chevreuse belonged, was a power in Europe. There was only one way out of the dilemma. He must keep her at Tours, safely under his hand. She was too hot to hold tightly, too explosive to drop.

Meanwhile Marie herself was in a state of restless anxiety that bordered on panic. For three years she had plotted under the very noses of the Cardinal's

spies and had done her dangerous work with cool self-confidence. Messengers had come and gone, letters had been received and despatched with the regularity of a well-organized postal system. Then, in August, had come a sudden break-down in the service. La Porte had been arrested and from that time there had been silence, utter and absolute.

Richelieu showed the greatest ingenuity in cutting all lines of communication. In that way he kept Anne shut off from her allies and insured that Marie would remain at Tours.

He was correct in his diagnosis. Although frantic with anxiety, it never occurred to Marie to escape without knowing whether Anne were safe. She sent messenger after messenger but without result. Instead of the information she wanted, there came a stream of letters from the Cardinal, positively dripping with amiability.

In an attempt to win her confidence, he used his vast influence on her behalf in the suit she was bringing against Chevreuse for separation of property. The Courts decided in her favor and granted her an income of 8000 crowns from the estate, but even at that time the law's delays were notorious. Spontaneously, Richelieu sent Marie a large sum of money to tide her over until the red tape should be untied.

For three weeks Marie remained in suspense. She was on the alert, all a-tingle with a sense of danger, but afraid to make a decisive move. Richelieu, complacent in the assurance that no news could reach

her, redoubled his amicable advances. He reckoned without the ingenuity of lovers, and the wholehearted loyalty of the Queen's coterie.

Rochefoucauld, after giving a most solemn oath that he would not go near Tours or have any communication with the Duchess, had been allowed to leave for his estates. He kept the letter of his vow but broke it in spirit. His romantic sympathies were all with the Queen. He had been one of the transient lovers of the Duchess and was now deep in love with the fair Marie de Hautefort.

One day, late in August, a mutual friend went to Tours with news of the true state of affairs in Paris. He told Marie that the Queen, for the moment, was safe. If the Duchess herself were in danger, some way of warning her would be found.

Once assured of the Queen's safety, Marie prepared for her own escape. She estimated the Cardinal's protestations of friendship at their true worth and was determined to fly beyond his reach. In this crisis she turned to her old friend, the Archbishop, and the smiles that she had lavished on him in the past had their reward. The octogenarian had been ordered to keep a close eye on her, but Marie quickly made him change his rôle of watch-dog for that of fellow-conspirator.

Golden curls and sparse grey locks bent together over maps of the countryside and his old heart thrilled to the call of vicarious adventure. After much discussion, a dash to the Spanish border was selected as having the best chance of success. The Archbishop furnished

Marie with maps, letters of introduction to friends en route and a safe-conduct through his territories. Armed with these, she completed her arrangements and waited for the signal to start.

During those critical days, it required all Marie's dramatic ability to preserve an unruffled front, but she accomplished it. She went about so calmly that the spies were thrown off their guard. Her visits to the Archbishop, of course, had been noticed but their little conspiracy had been covered by a convenient smoke screen of scandal. Marie's amorous proclivities were well known. The good matrons of Tours lifted horrified eyebrows and shook their powdered heads over the low moral tone of the Church. They even sympathized maliciously with the famous beauty who was reduced to practising her blandishments on an octogenarian.

Apart from this deplorable affair, Marie's behavior was almost blatant in its innocence. She moved about serenely and waited with what patience she could muster for news from Anne. On September 6, as she was returning from Church, Marie felt a small book being slipped into her hand. Without any change of expression she walked on, shut herself into her room and then, for the first time, dared to look at the message. It was a plain breviary with no identifying marks. She went through it carefully and even removed the binding without finding any message. Then she noticed the color of the cover. It was red, the sign of danger.

At the silent warning, Marie surrendered for a moment to a wave of blind panic. The Cardinal

was going to strike. Perhaps at that very minute his guards were on their way to arrest her. She sprang up in terror. Then her courage returned, and she made her hasty preparations with the utmost coolness. Ordering her carriage, she announced that she was going to visit her father at Couzieres. Calm and collected, she stepped into her coach, arranged her voluminous skirts, gave a few orders to her butler and drove away. With her rode two servants who had been devoted to her for years.

The lumbering coach with its decorated panels and liveried attendants moved through the streets with no appearance of haste, passed through the gates and took the road to Couzieres. The spies saw nothing suspicious in a visit to her father. Not being gifted with sight which would pierce the solid wood-work of the coach, they saw no reason to hurry, and their quarry escaped.

Swaying on its leather springs, jarring as the wheels sank into ruts, rocking and rumbling, the great coach rolled sedately along until it reached a wooded section of the road where a by-path turned off to the South. Then things began to happen with bewildering speed. The coach was turned off the road into the wood, the horses led out from between the shafts, and saddles were adjusted. At Tours, a stately Duchess had entered the carriage, almost filling it with her billowing skirts. In her broad hat with its sweeping plumes, her dainty high heeled shoes, her ruffles and laces, she had been the typical lady of fashion. At the cross-roads there sprang out a lithe young gallant, trim in black velvet with high riding boots of soft

leather. A short cape, swinging from the shoulder gave a touch of grace to the slim figure, but a workman-like rapier hung at her side. Evidently the wearer was no stranger to arms. A bandage covered much of the forehead and was held in place by a band of black taffeta. A fair peruque, dressed in the approved court style, flowed to her shoulders and a broad black hat with a drooping plume helped to conceal her skilfully-stained face.

Without a moment's delay Marie sprang into the saddle and rode off at full speed, followed by the two servants. The coach was abandoned in the wood, and it was not until they had ridden twenty miles that Marie realized with dismay that she had left the precious maps and letters in it. It was a tragic beginning to her journey but there was nothing to be done. By now the coach would have been found by her watch-dogs, and the maps would have betrayed her destination. Only speed could save her. She had perhaps twenty miles start and there might be some delay in organizing pursuit. With that tiny margin of safety Marie set out undaunted on her three-hundred-mile ride to Spain.

All afternoon and night she rode, and in the morning reached Rochefoucauld's estate. By this time she was exhausted but dared not stop to rest. In any case she would not endanger her friend by asking for refuge. Instead she wrote a note, unsigned and in a disguised hand:

"Sir, I am a gentleman who asks your aid to preserve his liberty and perhaps his life. I have fought a duel and have killed a nobleman of distinction. This

forces me to leave France in haste, as I am pursued. I believe you to be generous enough to serve me without knowing me. I need a carriage and a valet."

With all her faults, Marie de Chevreuse was a sportsman. Even in her own desperate straits she remembered to protect her friend. It was the phrase "without knowing me" that saved Rochefoucauld from the vengeance of Richelieu.

Her excuse, too, was well chosen. Since the Cardinal's own brother had been killed in a duel, he had been very severe in his enforcement of the edicts against duelling and several nobles had been executed for defiance of the law. This did not prevent the average gentleman from looking on a duel as the obvious way to settle all arguments, and anyone of them who had fallen foul of the law in this respect would find a host of sympathizers.

Without hesitation, Rochefoucauld sent the carriage and one of his servants. Exchanging the saddle for the cushioned seat, Marie slept all day while she was being driven steadily southward. During the night the journey continued, and the morning brought her to the small estate held by the Sieur de Malbâti, one of Rochefoucauld's gentlemen-tenants. Here Marie dismissed her own servants and the carriage and persuaded Malbâti to guide her on the next stage of the way. The good man accepted her story of the duel but showed some curiosity as to her identity. Finally she allowed him to gather the impression that she was the young Duke

d'Enghien, son of the Duke de Condé, and he appeared to be satisfied.

His suspicions may have been aroused later when they met on the road a gentleman whom she had known at Court. "If I had met you under different circumstances, and differently dressed," remarked the traveller, "I should think that you were Madame de Chevreuse." Marie cheerfully admitted that there was some resemblance but explained that she was a close relative of the lady in question.

Whatever Malbâti thought, he stood by loyally and shared the hazards of that hectic journey. It was a succession of exhausting rides and hair-breadth escapes. By now the hunt was up, and it was not a question of mere speed. Main roads must be avoided. The travellers were often forced to make detours or circle back on their tracks to elude pursuers. Richelieu's men patrolled every road and formed a network all over the country. Several times the fugitives hid in some wood while the guards rode by, or dodged them in a maze of by-roads.

Apart from the ever-present danger of the pursuit, there was the hazard of chance encounters. Marie was too well-known for her own convenience. She had convinced the gentleman on the road but there were other *contretemps,* and she must have felt, with exasperation, that the inns of Southern France were populated by people from the Court. In a lonely inn, far off the beaten track, she walked carelessly into a room, only to find two ladies sitting there who knew her well. Turning

on her heel, she retreated before they could see her face, and was off again on the endless road.

On another occasion, utterly exhausted, she arrived at an inn, and took a room. She had just taken off her peruque and shaken her own hair loose when a chambermaid walked in and stood staring at the unexpected apparition. Marie did not stop to explain. Hastily replacing the bandage on her aching head, she called for her horses and went her weary way.

After a few such narrow escapes, the fugitives avoided all inns and slept wherever they could find shelter. Sometimes it was a humble cottage, sometimes the lee of a hay stack or a barn. Afraid to approach the regular posting houses, they bought horses as necessary, ate what they could find and slept when they could. Malbâti would forage while Marie lay in hiding and on one occasion she started up in a panic from her impromptu bed of hay in a barn to see a woman looking down at her. There was no cause for alarm. The farmer's wife had been watching the sleeping "youth" with romantic admiration and declared that he was "the handsomest lad she had ever seen." She urged him to come into the house and accept her hospitality which, according to the story, was all-embracing.

After some two weeks of this precarious journeying, Malbâti's young son appeared on the scene. He brought a peremptory message from Madame Malbâti, ordering her husband to come home at once. Evidently inquiries around Tours had aroused her suspicions,

and she had no intention of allowing her better half to ramble all over France with a beautiful Duchess.

Malbâti himself had come to the conclusion that the "Duke d'Enghien" was not all that "he" appeared. As a logical man, he could not reconcile blood on the saddle with a head wound. Being an obedient spouse he turned homeward but he left his son to take his place as escort. The Pyrenees were said to be infested with bandits, and he was reluctant to allow the gallant companion of so many hardships to go on alone. At parting, Marie gave Malbâti one of the few remaining *rouleaux* of Richelieu's gold and thanked him wholeheartedly for his help. Then she set out on the last and most perilous stage of her journey.

At that time, few gentlemen travelled without a strong escort of armed servants as insurance against the highwaymen and footpads who terrorized the country. A woman and a lad would have small chance if they fell in with these gentry. Apart from this danger, there were the natural hazards of the mountainous country that must be traversed before Marie could reach the border. She dared not travel by the main roads and was forced to fall back on goat paths along precipitous cliffs, where a misstep meant destruction. Through little stone villages, where the Basques spoke a language strange to her, over crags wrapped in clinging, blinding mist and down into hidden valleys, she made her way and every day brought her nearer to safety. The young Malbâti had pierced her disguise and guided her with the inspired enthusiasm of an enamored boy-scout. At last she stood

actually on the boundary line, a single step from safety. Turning to her loyal young companion, she tried to reward him for his services but Malbâti refused to take any money. It had been a labor of love, and he wanted only one reward.

Tearing off the disfiguring wig, Marie took the lad in her arms and kissed him, giving him one moment of heart-shaking bliss. He turned homewards, the great adventure over. Marie went on to Madrid.

From the border she sent her jewels, worth many thousand crowns, back to Rochefoucauld with the message that he could keep them for her until she could reclaim them, or inherit them if she never returned. She also, with characteristic impudence, wrote to the gentleman who had recognized her on the road. She told him that his suspicions were quite justified and asked him to send her some clothing more suitable to her sex and circumstances.

Richelieu's troops had been close on her trail several times but her detours and doublings had baffled them. When they finally reached the border, it was to find that she had crossed it less than twenty-four hours before. Loath to admit defeat, the Cardinal sent a royal herald, resplendent in purple and fleurs-de-lys, across the frontier. He announced to all whom it might concern that Madame de Chevreuse might return to France in perfect safety but Madame was by that time well on her way to Madrid. She knew nothing about the herald until later, but it is doubtful if she would have trusted in the Cardinal's good faith.

Marie crossed the border a fugitive, ragged and travel-stained. She entered Madrid like a visiting queen. At the first news of her approach, King Phillip had sent a vast escort to meet her with several State coaches, each drawn by six horses. By this elaborate welcome, Phillip showed his gratitude for her services to his sister and also did the thing most calculated to annoy Richelieu.

Marie was installed in state apartments in the palace and treated as an honored guest by both King and Queen. The grandees of Spain paid her stately compliments and the courtiers vied with each other in doing homage to their distinguished visitor. Her welcome had a political aspect but her intrinsic charm won for her a personal triumph. She was soon as fêted and adored as she had been in England or at the Court of Lorraine. Sonnets were written to her eye-brows, guitars twanged beneath her windows and hearts were laid recklessly at her little feet. Even the chilly Phillip seems to have succumbed to her charms. He offered her a large pension and a permanent place at his Court.

A greater tribute was paid her by that veteran statesman, Olivarez, the Richelieu of Spain. He was so impressed by her political acumen that he urged her to join the Council of State and frequently asked her advice on foreign affairs. Spain was at her feet, Phillip and Olivarez at her service. Marie was now in a position to carry on her campaign against Richelieu under the most favorable conditions. With truly feminine inconsistency, she found her position in Madrid intolerable.

For years she had intrigued against King and Cardinal and in each cabal had looked on Spain as her natural ally. She had seen nothing unpatriotic in arranging that Spanish troops should invade France as part of her wide-flung schemes. Now that she was actually in the heart of the enemy's country, she had a violent attack of patriotism, belated but none the less sincere.

Marie decided to take refuge in a neutral country where she would not be hampered by conscientious scruples. For a few weeks she waited, recovering from the strain of her nerve-wracking journey. When it is remembered that Marie was nearing forty, and lived in an age when women were not the athletic creatures of to-day, her adventures become even more incredible.

During her stay in Madrid, she accepted the hospitality of the King and Queen but steadfastly refused to take any Spanish money. In view of the fact that Phillip's sister, Anne, was heavily in her debt, and that her own finances were in a precarious state, her scruples do her credit. Early in January she sailed away for England, leaving Phillip disconsolate.

It was thirteen years since Marie had crossed the Channel as matron of honor to the royal bride. She was then at the zenith of her career, fabulously wealthy, ravishingly beautiful, the bright star of the French Court. For two hilarious months she had disported herself at sunny Hampton Court or set an amused London by the ears. The gallant young King and his French bride were at the beginning of a reign that seemed full of promise and the future seemed cloudless.

Tempora mutantur. She reached the dreary shores of an England wrapped in chilly, wintry fog. A cloud of uneasy gloom rested heavily on the spirits of Englishmen in those dark days before the outbreak of the civil war. At Court a haggard and worried King kept up a gallant show of state with pitifully little money, and all over the country men were arming for the inevitable struggle.

To this sad ghost of a Court came Marie, herself a refugee and woefully short of funds. Charles had nothing to give her but welcome, but that she received in heart-warming abundance. In return, by her sheer verve and unquenchable gaiety, she lifted the pall of gloom and brought some of her own sunny philosophy to a Court that had almost forgotten how to laugh. Montagu, writing to a friend in France said: "She makes our Court so gay." It was an unconscious tribute to her gallant spirit. Heaven knows she had little cause for merriment. All her estates had been confiscated and the income diverted to the royal treasury. Chevreuse, as usual, was one short jump ahead of his creditors, and her noble father had involved himself in a financial tangle that defied solution. Deprived of her own income, unable to get help from her family, Marie was facing absolute destitution unless she borrowed from her English friends, and that she positively would not do. Worst of all, she had been obliged to use Richelieu's money for her escape, and the thought of being in his debt was intolerable.

It was not a hopeful prospect but Marie faced it courageously and managed to extract a good deal

of amusement out of life. The eye-filling presence of Buckingham was missing from the picture, but there remained many friends of former days, and she daily added to her long list of conquests. Lord Holland was at hand, always her devoted servant to command. So were Montagu, young Craft, the enamored youth of Tours, and many another.

Richelieu had groaned in spirit when he heard that, after all his precautions, the Duchess had actually arrived in England. He anticipated every kind of trouble and her rapturous reception at Court seemed to justify his forebodings. His spies reported her ever-widening sphere of influence, but they were also aware of her financial difficulties. There lay a gleam of hope. The Cardinal hoped to reduce her to such straits that she would surrender, or allow herself to be lured back to France by the restoration of her estates. As long as he held the purse-strings he could play a waiting game.

So matters continued during that winter, but in the meantime a very curious event had taken place in France. It was to affect not only Marie's checkered career but the whole course of history.

CHAPTER XIII

IT was early in January, 1638, that Marie de Chevreuse arrived in England. Just about that time a snow-storm that has since become historic wrapped Paris in a whirling, blinding mantle of white. It was a curious snow-storm. It hid many things and has kept them hidden for three hundred years. To this day no one can say with any accuracy what happened or, to be more explicit, what probably did not happen. The veil of obscurity is, to some extent, lifted for us by Madame de Motteville in her memoirs. Her story is interesting, if true, and shall be quoted verbatim.

"*On crût même que ce fût un jour qu'étant demeuré tard au convent, il fût un si mauvais temps que le roi fût obligé de demeurer au Louvre ou il n'y avait d'autre lit que celui de la reine. Quoiqu'il ce soit, ce fût alors que Dieu donna à la France cet august prince, Louis XIV qui fût nommé du peuple Dieudonné.*" The literal translation deserves careful notice. "*It was even believed* that one day, having stayed late at the convent, the weather was so bad that the King was obliged to stay at the Louvre where there was no other bed but the Queen's. *However it may have been*, it was then that God gave to France that august Prince, Louis XIV, who was called by the people the 'God-given'."

Interesting? Yes. True? Possibly. Let us study the evidence.

In the first place, the story is only told by Madame de Motteville who has constituted herself the champion of Anne against all attacks. It was written during the reign of Louis XIV who would not relish any hint of his own illegitimacy. Even then the good lady is careful not to commit herself to a direct statement. She uses the gossips' phrase "on crût," the indefinite "it was believed" that involves no responsibility for the speaker.

In the second place, it is incredible that, in the dead of winter, there should only be one bed in the Louvre. During the summer the Court sometimes moved out to the Palace of St. Germains, taking all the furniture along. But Louis was living almost alone in the hunting-lodge. Anne was maintaining a small court at the Louvre, yet her normal household numbered a hundred persons of high rank, besides stewards, cup-bearers, secretaries, physicians, musicians, valets, chamber-maids, etc. There were over one hundred and fifty cooks and kitchen helpers alone, bringing the total household of the Louvre to over six hundred.

In all that densely populated rabbit-warren of a palace, is it even remotely possible that a bed could not have been found for the King? Anne may, of course, have beguiled her husband into sharing her suite. He had just come from a meeting with Louise de la Fayette, who was continually urging reconciliation. If there had been some such *rapprochement,* why did he

retire again into his celibate shell? Even when the arrival of the heir was imminent, he remained coldly uninterested and had to be dragged forcibly to his wife's bedside to greet the offspring.

A recent biographer of Louis XIV says that Richelieu brought about the reconciliation and there was a "well-authenticated" meeting at St. Maur. He fails, however, to give any authorities for his statement. He also fails to explain why and on what occasion the King and Queen went, in the dead of winter, to the Duke de Condé's summer estate. If such a "well-authenticated meeting" had taken place, it seems strange that Anne would not have mentioned it to her adoring biographer. One is forced to the conclusion that the Queen had a reason for her vagueness on this important point.

She was in desperate straits, humiliated and defeated. She faced neglect during the King's lifetime, followed by an inglorious existence as ex-Queen. Only the appearance of an heir could save the situation, and the heir duly appeared.

Contemporary historians are unanimous in their conviction of the illegitimacy of Louis XIV. They are anything but unanimous in their selection of a father for him. One writer announces without hesitation that he was the son of a certain handsome captain of the royal guard named Comminges. In support of this idea is the fact that Comminges was shown great favor by Anne during her regency and thus excited the jealousy of Mazarin. Another candidate was the young Duke de Beaufort, son of the Duke de Vendôme, who was ap-

pointed by Anne as guardian of the royal children and treated with marked affection.

Popular gossip attributed the honor of being the father of the Prince to the Marquis d'Ancre, judging by a ribald rhyme that went the rounds in Paris. Modesty forbids quotation but it was to the general effect that the child should be black since it was made of ink. The French word for ink is "encre," which makes the poor pun sufficiently obvious.

Some historians suggest that Richelieu took advantage of Anne's abject submission and supplanted the King in the bedroom, as he had already done in the council chamber. There is much to be said both for and against this last theory. The appearance of an heir after twenty-three years of married life was calculated to rouse the Cardinal's keenest suspicions, but he accepted the miracle without comment. He even rewarded the bearer of the news with a cup of gold.

Anne's own conduct is a curious blend of bravado and shame. A contemporary writes that "The Queen herself was so little hopeful of being believed that she had scarcely made the announcement when she took refuge in Val de Grace, as in a fortress, from the Argus eyes of the world and from the suspicions of her husband." The non-committal attitude of Louis suggests that Richelieu advised him to resign himself to the inevitable and take the heir that Fate had sent him. Almost anything was better than having Gaston on the throne.

The husband, thus miraculously endowed with a son, treated the whole affair with apathetic

calm. He ignored the Queen during her pregnancy, and received the congratulations of the Court with a marked lack of enthusiasm.

Richelieu, on the contrary, treated Anne with great cordiality. He even released La Porte in the Spring and allowed him to return to the Queen's service. Another prisoner freed from the Bastille at this time was de Jars, whose liberty must be credited to the efforts of Marie de Chevreuse.

She persuaded King Charles to intercede with Richelieu for the unfortunate victim. The Cardinal drove a hard bargain and finally released de Jars on the understanding that he might be allowed to raise two regiments of mercenaries in Scotland. De Jars was then handed over to Lord Digby, the English Ambassador in Paris, and made his way to Rome.

The Cardinal, in reality, was glad to do this favor for the King of England. In some measure it would counteract the upsetting influence of the Duchess and would also pave the way for reconciliation with her. He wanted the lady back in France but could not, with dignity, make the first move.

It was the news of Anne's approaching motherhood that finally opened the door to negotiations. When the announcement reached a frankly incredulous London, Marie saw an opportunity to write to her friend and promptly seized it. She had been forbidden to communicate with Anne, but on such an occasion as this, it was quite *en regle* for any member of the court circle to write a formal letter of congratulation.

Marie's letter was a triumph of stately grace, obviously written for the Cardinal's critical eye. In polished prose she expressed her joy at the news and her prayers for a happy outcome, and regretted that, owing to unfortunate circumstances, for which she was in no way responsible, she was unable to deliver her congratulations in person.

Enclosed with this masterpiece of bland impudence went a private note begging Anne to pay to Richelieu the money that Marie owed him. If the Queen would only relieve her mind of this weight of obligation, the balance of her debt to the Duchess might wait indefinitely.

Evidently the official letter became known to Richelieu. It gave him the desired opening and he plunged into negotiations with the exile. In his first letter to her he said graciously that there was no reason why she should not return to her own country. He promised her pardon of all past offences if she, in turn, would refrain from any further activities against the State. It was the opening move in a game of political chess in which the great minister met an opponent as shrewd and wily as himself. Fearful lest Marie should upset the delicate political equilibrium in England, Richelieu wanted to get her back to France. Once there, he would very possibly imprison her for his own peace of mind. This was Marie's great fear. She, in turn, longed for France and her children but she could not face the prospect of confinement. Better penniless exile in England than a fortress in France.

The duel went on for months, the combatants fencing with meticulous courtesy, manœuvring for position, countering each move with consummate skill. In the end it was a Pyrrhic victory in which both lost.

In reply to Marie's request for an assurance of pardon, the Cardinal drew up a magnificent safe-conduct, gorgeous with seals and ribbons, granting amnesty for all treasonous dealings with the Duke of Lorraine. Marie blandly retorted that she had never had any treasonous dealings with the Duke of Lorraine and could not consent to be branded with such a charge. After more manœuvring, the Cardinal made concessions. He sent her a full pardon and assurance of safety, arranged for her to sail for France on a certain date, and sent money to cover all expenses.

Armed with this written assurance, Marie paid her debts, took leave of her friends and embarked. Just as the boat was about to sail, an anonymous note was handed to her, written in the cipher used in the last conspiracy. In it the writer solemnly warned her that Richelieu was only luring her back to France in order to imprison her.

Without a moment's hesitation, Marie had her baggage carried ashore again. Then she told the Captain that she had changed her mind and gave him the note to deliver to Richelieu. The correspondence began again. The Cardinal vowed that his assurances of safety were sincere. She politely begged leave to doubt him.

Once again Marie was on the verge of sailing when she received a second warning. This one was from her lover and faithful friend, Charles of Lorraine. He declared, over his own signature, that she was going into a trap and pleaded with her to remain out of France.

This letter also went to Richelieu and, in his reply, he allowed impatience to get the better of discretion. "Madame," he wrote, "if you are innocent, your safety depends on yourself. If the levity of the human mind, not to say of the sex, has caused you to commit something of which His Majesty has cause to complain, you will find in his goodness everything which you can possibly expect of it." Not having any great expectations of the benefits to be gained from Louis' "goodness," Marie was anything but reassured.

Finally, while she was still undecided, came the third warning from the friend whom she had least reason to doubt. One day at Court the Duke de Chevreuse laughingly accused the Queen of keeping his wife away from him. Anne dared not speak frankly but she smiled at the Duke and said casually that she, too, missed her friend but she "would never advise her to come back."

When this was reported to Marie, she understood it as a veiled warning and decided definitely to resist all the Cardinal's blandishments.

Meanwhile Chevreuse had been pressed into service by Richelieu. The Duke wrote incessantly, complaining about his loneliness and his difficultites in

bringing up the family. He had taken the line of least resistance by unceremoniously consigning his daughters to a convent. He wanted them near Paris, but the Cardinal refused to have any more females of that family within reach, and immured them in a little provincial convent out of the danger zone.

Marie's letters to her husband are very characteristic. In one she says: "I ardently desire to see myself again in France in a position to retrieve our fortunes and live tranquilly with you and my children, but I see so much danger in going there, as I understand affairs, that I cannot risk it, knowing that I can neither work to your advantage or theirs if I am in trouble. I must therefore patiently seek some safe road which will finally lead me there with the repose of mind which I cannot now find."

The letter casts some interesting lights on the many-sided personality of Marie de Chevreuse. It shows her clear reasoning, her generous desire to work for those she loves, and her calm assumption that she can handle situations where Chevreuse is all at sea. With all this is her virtuous desire for "tranquillity," which she would inevitably devote to wrecking the Cardinal's peace of mind.

Even while Marie was writing wistfully about "repose of mind" and a "safe road," she was deep in another cabal. From London she was in touch with the Duke de Vendôme, the Count de Soissons, de Jars and other exiles. Holland and Montagu were in her confidence and through official channels she corresponded

with Madrid and Rome. A certain Rosetti who had at one time enjoyed her favor held an important position at the Papal court and acted as her agent there.

Richelieu suspected, or knew of, her activities and made one last attempt to get her back to France. The Duke de Chevreuse was swamped with debts and his affairs were in the most hopeless confusion. While keeping tight hold on Marie's own estates, Richelieu offered to help the Duke out of his difficulties if he would fetch his wife home. Chevreuse professed himself the most humble grateful servant of His Eminence, declared that the treasonous behavior of his wife was abhorrent to him, and promised faithfully to bring her back.

Then he left the august presence and cheerfully repudiated all his debts, saying that the Cardinal himself had said that he need not pay them. At this, Richelieu flew into a royal rage and informed everyone within earshot that the Duke was "as dishonest as his wife." Then, sending for the impecunious and impenitent nobleman, he broke the news to him that his debts must be paid and that he would not get any assistance until Marie was actually on French soil.

Very crest-fallen, Chevreuse set out for England to capture his erring wife but he was too late. Warned in the nick of time, Marie had left for Brussels the day before the Duke arrived. Once again, with only a few hours grace, she had escaped the Cardinal's grasp and was free to carry on her little games. Brussels was already a hotbed of sedition, with Marie de Medici and

her coterie ready to take a hand in anything that would embarrass Richelieu. Inevitably, the presence of the intriguing Duchess would stir up this hornet's nest, but for the time being Richelieu was obliged to leave her alone.

During the two years that she had spent in England, an amusing situation had been developing at Court, although His Eminence failed to see the humor of it.

With the retirement of Louise de la Fayette into her convent, Louis had found himself lonelier than ever and turned for consolation to Marie de Hautefort. Her temporary fall from favor had not taught the maid-of-honor discretion, and they fell to quarrelling again with unabated vigor. "You love an ingrate," Louis would say gloomily, "and one day you will find out how she will repay you for your services."

For once in his futile life, Louis was right but Marie was deaf to warnings. She continued devoted to Anne but pleased Louis by her incessant attacks on Richelieu. At this time His Majesty was literally seething with grievances against his Minister of State. He felt himself bullied, brow-beaten, involved in endless wars that never seemed to accomplish anything, cut off from his mother and friends, hampered in every direction.

Finding in Marie de Hautefort a kindred soul, he wooed her doggedly, in spite of her sarcastic tongue, and gave a number of hunting parties in her honor.

For much of the Court gossip at this period we are indebted to the memoirs of La Grande

Mademoiselle, the daughter of Gaston by the Montpensier heiress. Describing one of these hunting parties she writes: "We were all dressed in colors and rode fine ambling horses, richly caparisoned. To shield us from the sun, each of us had a hat trimmed with a quantity of plumes. Coming home the King placed himself in my coach, between me and Mademoiselle de Hautefort, and conversed agreeably to us of everything. At that time he suffered us to speak freely enough of the Cardinal and the proof that it did not displease him was that he spoke thus himself."

Determined as ever to remove Marie de Hautefort from the King's side, Richelieu fell back on his old scheme of supplying a counter-attraction, but this time he resolved to eschew all women. The hussies were altogether too illogical and unaccountable to be of any use to a sane man. He would select a young man, show him clearly that loyalty to His Eminence would be richly rewarded, and then turn him loose.

The new candidate for the King's fickle affections was Henri d'Effiat, Count de Cinq Mars. His father had been one of the Cardinal's most trusted servants and there was every reason to believe that the son would follow in his steps. Cinq Mars was young and light-hearted, graceful in manner, witty in speech and astonishingly good to look at. There was a paucity of brain behind the beautiful face, a hint of petulance in the full mouth, but so much the better. A weak man would be easier to handle.

Richelieu had an interview with Cinq Mars in which he explained clearly the reward to be expected for faithful service, and, even more clearly, what would be the penalty for failure. Then he placed his new tool among the King's gentlemen-in-waiting and sat back to await results. They exceeded his wildest hopes.

No sooner had Louis seen the handsome lad than he conceived a violent infatuation for him. In a few weeks his feelings were so ardent and so openly demonstrated that Chavigny wrote to a friend: "Never has the King had a passion for anyone more violent than for him. I hear that he said to Mademoiselle de Hautefort that he could no longer pretend to have any affection for her because he had given it all to Cinq Mars."

Richelieu, always implacable, could now take his revenge on the maid-of-honor who had dared to flout him. He went to the King and demanded her dismissal, with his resignation as the alternative. Louis was aghast at having to make a decision but soon capitulated. Marie de Hautefort had faded into insignificance in the glamor of this new love while Richelieu was indispensable. He wrote to the Minister: "Everything has gone well since you have been in charge of affairs. That is what makes me pray you not to retire, for in that case my affairs would go badly. Monsieur (Gaston) and many others would be glad to have me rid myself of you, but be assured that I will protect you against everything, and that I will never abandon you."

Marie de Hautefort was dismissed from Court and came to take her leave of the King. Louis

wept but even at that emotional moment Marie must needs allow her sharp tongue to wag. "You are the King," she remarked sarcastically, "and I am your friend, yet you cannot keep me with you because the Cardinal will not allow it."

To Anne, the loss of the girl was a serious blow. It deprived her of the last of her intimate group of friends. Once again, like a magician producing rabbits out of a hat, Richelieu supplied a perfect substitute.

He appeared before her one day with a tall, elegant young Italian by his side. "You should be very fond of this gentleman, Madame," he said sardonically. "See how strongly he resembles the Duke of Buckingham."

It was an introduction hardly calculated to endear the newcomer to Anne, but strangely enough this was the first meeting of two lovers whose romance was to last until death parted them. The substitute so thoughtfully provided was Giulio Mazarini, better known to history as Mazarin. He was the young Papal Envoy who had made such a dramatic appearance on the battlefield at Casale. He had returned to France as one of Richelieu's secretaries and, on the death of Father Joseph in the previous year, had taken his place as confidential secretary and unofficial adviser.

Mazarin at this time was in the early thirties, in the prime of his dark beauty. He was a graceful, supple creature with a musical voice whose every note was a caress. His liquid black eyes glowed with respectful fervor and he was a master of romantic technique. Without a moment's delay he laid seige to the heart of the lonely Queen. His sympathetic adoration, his humble devotion, his whole attitude of restrained passion fell like balm on Anne's hurt vanity and restored her self-esteem. Isolated from all her former associates, Anne fell ever more and more under the Italian's subtle spell. It was a master stroke on the part of Richelieu. Through his secretary, he detached the Queen from her treasonous associates and made her more in sympathy with his own policies.

In this same year, 1640, Anne presented her astonished husband with another son, Phillippe, later Duke of Orleans.

Louis was too engrossed with his own love affair to be disturbed by his wife's eccentric proceedings. He adored Cinq Mars to the point of blind infatuation and refused to be parted from that sprightly youth night or day. Cinq Mars was even obliged to share the royal bed with his elderly admirer. In return for the pleasure of his company, Louis loaded the favorite with costly gifts. He even astonished the Court by conferring on him the exalted post of Grand Equerry, which carried with it the courtesy title of Monsieur le Grand. As a general thing this post was only given to noblemen of highest rank and implied the intimate friendship and confidence of the King.

Cinq Mars, while flattered by his sudden rise to the dizzy heights of royal favor, was far from returning the affection lavished on him. On the contrary

he was bored to distraction with the King's "long yellow face and his interminable hunting stories." He was far happier lounging in a perfumed boudoir than messing about in the mud digging out foxes' earths or getting up at dawn to snare magpies. He disliked hunting, hated gardening and positively loathed being taken down into the kitchen to make candy.

The handsome Equerry was very popular with the ladies of the Court but his affections were divided between the Princess Marie de Gonzaga and the famous courtesan, Marion de Lorme, who had been Richelieu's mistress. Louis had dragged him out to St. Germains to share his rustic amusements, but Cinq Mars refused to be caged. Every night he would ride into Paris, spend his time and energies with the ladies of his heart, and gallop back to St. Germains at dawn. Naturally enough he was not in the best of tempers when wakened an hour later to go hunting with His Majesty.

Between the jealous, exacting King and his spoiled darling a series of quarrels broke out, as furious as they were futile. Cinq Mars was nothing but a peevish boy, but Louis took these squabbles with deadly seriousness. He would spend hours laboriously writing out verbatim accounts which were sent post haste to Richelieu. The unfortunate Minister must needs drop whatever work he was doing and travel out to St. Germains to arbitrate. Without allowing a glint of humor to mar the majestic solemnity of his behavior, Richelieu would adjudicate between the two combatants and bring

about a reconciliation. Often it required as much finesse and tact as an international treaty.

Louis, poor humorless wretch, would always insist on drawing up a formal peace pact and some of these fatuous documents are still in existence.

On one occasion, Cinq Mars, exasperated by the jealous watchfulness of the King, sent him a peremptory message ordering him "not to be, for the future, so constantly at my heels." Louis promptly wrote to Richelieu: "I told him that, considering his obligations to me, he ought not to address me in that manner and he answered in his usual way that he did not want my kindness; that he could very well do without it and that he would be just as well pleased to be plain Monsieur de Cinq Mars as Monsieur le Grand, but as for changing his ways or his life, he couldn't do it; and so, he continually nagging at me and I at him, we came as far as the courtyard, etc."

Evidently Richelieu made peace on this occasion. A solemn document was drawn up stating that: "We, the undersigned, certify to whomsoever it may concern that we are well pleased with each other and have never been in such perfect mutual understanding as at this present time. In testimony whereof we have signed this present certificate."

Other quarrels were caused by Cinq Mars' interference in military matters. Louis fancied himself a genius along these lines and was quick to resent the intrusion of an amateur. When Cinq Mars ventured to criticize a plan submitted by one of the Generals, the

King turned on him savagely, asking him if he had been out at dawn inspecting the lines. Then he remarked to the General "He is the most ungrateful man on earth. A Kingdom would not pay his expenses. He actually has, at this moment, more than three hundred pairs of boots."

The connection between the military situation and the state of the favorite's wardrobe is not obvious to the logical mind but Louis was nursing a two-fold grievance. He had the parsimony of a *petit bourgeois* and grudged the very gifts he gave. This quarrel too was smoothed over and another treaty drawn up: "To-day, May 19, 1640, the King being at Soissons, His Majesty has seen fit to promise Monsieur le Grand that during all this campaign he will not be angry with him. If Monsieur le Grand should give him some slight cause, the complaint will be made by His Majesty to the Cardinal without bitterness."

It is a revealing document, for all its stately wording. Louis was the absolute monarch of France, but he must needs run whining to his Minister because a boy of eighteen was rude to him, Historical research plays havoc with "the divinity that doth hedge about a king."

All this extravagant lunacy went to the head of a boy never overburdened with brains. Finding that he could wheedle or bully the King into granting his slightest wish, he conceived the magnificent idea of becoming a Peer of France and contracting a brilliant alliance. He demanded the hand of Marie de Gonzaga,

daughter of the Duke of Mantua, and seemed likely to gain his end. Then Richelieu intervened. He brushed the matrimonial project aside with careless contempt and reminded Cinq Mars that he had been given his post with the King in order that he might make himself useful. The boy was dismissed from his presence with a final warning that he would do well to justify his promotion lest a worse thing befall him.

Cinq Mars ignored the veiled threat and plunged on his headlong way. His next error was to accompany the King to a meeting of the Council, with the intention of becoming a power in the State. At his entrance, Richelieu raised his arched eyebrows, postponed all the important items on the agenda and wasted the time of the Council on trivial details, remarking sarcastically that State affairs should not be discussed before children.

In delivering such a crushing rebuke Richelieu himself made an error that caused him infinite trouble. He had raised the boy from obscurity to fame but gained nothing by it. Cinq Mars believed that he owed his rapid promotion to his own ineffable charms and saw no reason to be grateful to the Cardinal. This cruel snub wounded his vanity and from that moment Cinq Mars was the bitter opponent of his benefactor. Before long he was in touch with the malcontents at Brussels, headed by Marie de Chevreuse.

CHAPTER XIV

WITH Marie's flight to Brussels in 1640, she entered on the final phase of her long duel with Richelieu. She had engineered three great conspiracies against the Minister, and in each case her love for the Queen had been the motive. In the fourth cabal in which she was about to engage, her aims were purely personal. Richelieu stood between her and a life of ease and comfort in France. Unless she were prepared to resign herself to poverty and exile, he must be removed.

Brussels was at that time the seat of the Spanish Government in the Netherlands and the headquarters of the faction opposed to Richelieu. The Duke of Lorraine, who had been forced by the Cardinal to abdicate his throne, had taken up his residence there. So also had his sister, Margaret, whose marriage to Gaston had never been officially recognized by France. Marie de Medici had for years made Brussels her home but she was now too old to take any active part in the incessant plots and wandered off to Cologne.

Another nucleus of disaffection was the semi-independent border fortress of Sedan, ruled by the Duke de Bouillon. With him was the Count de Soissons, still nursing his perennial grievances. Between Brussels, Sedan and Paris a stream of transients came and went,

visiting exiled friends and keeping open the lines of communication. Scattered about in various adjacent countries were other nobles, who had been driven from France by the harsh policy of the Red Pest. All had grievances which they burned to avenge, but the only thing they had in common was their hatred of the Cardinal. There were almost as many plots as there were plotters. It was Marie's first task to co-ordinate all their abortive efforts and to bring order out of chaos.

To all the plotters, Spain figured in the dual rôle of ally and banker. Richelieu's anti-Spanish policy made him a dangerous foe, and it was sound tactics to harass him in every way possible. Each petty conspiracy engaged some fraction of his attention and prevented him from concentrating all his faculties on the war. As Michelet says: "This great statesman wasted his time and strength struggling against the innumerable insects which kept stinging him."

Immediately after her arrival in Brussels, Marie spread her web of allure before Don Antonio Sarmiento, the Spanish Governor, and soon entangled him in its fragrant meshes. He became her lover and the enthusiastic supporter of her schemes. Her next move was to prolong the war between France and Spain. The busier Richelieu was, the less time he would have to watch his political foes.

Of late, victory had perched on the French standards and Spain was almost ready to capitulate. Peace parleys were actually going on and Richelieu had hopes of winning terms extremely favorable to

France. At the last moment the Spanish plenipotentiaries began to haggle with renewed energy. They re-opened questions that had been satisfactorily settled and stiffened their resistance to the French demands. Richelieu was at a loss to understand this change of heart until he discovered the finger of Marie in the diplomatic pie. In disgust he wrote to Louis: "No tolerable peace can be hoped for. Madame de Chevreuse had given the Spaniards such a description of the situation in France that they will not come to terms."

Holding Spain back with one hand, Marie now reached out the other and gathered in Lorraine. On the abdication of Duke Charles, the throne had been taken by his brother, the Cardinal-Prince. This doughty prelate had won a throne and a bride by an astonishing bit of chicanery. In those days, a Cardinal need not necessarily be in Holy Orders, but our friend of Lorraine was actually a consecrated Bishop and, as such, vowed to perpetual celibacy. This made matrimony difficult, and his choice had fallen on his own cousin, which further complicated matters.

After a little thought, the Cardinal solved his problem with an ingenuity worthy of a better cause. Doubtful of getting a Papal dispensation, he, in his capacity of Cardinal, granted to himself, as Duke, a dispensation to marry his cousin. Then still as Cardinal, he issued to himself, as Bishop, a license to perform the ceremony. The marriage was duly solemnized by a deputy, and the new Duke calmly fell to work to found a family.

This ingenious soul had signed a treaty of alliance with France, but a trifle like that weighed on him not at all. He readily fell in with Marie's schemes and prepared to support the conspiracy.

Within a few short weeks Marie had thus destroyed the fruit of Richelieu's diplomacy and snatched away the profits of years of war. With Spain and Lorraine solidly at her back, she now wanted to gather in the strategic fortress of Sedan. It was at this point that a suave and charming young gentleman called Alexandre Campion appeared in Brussels. He came to see her on behalf of the Count de Soissons, who was on the warpath and wanted her assistance.

Soissons was preparing to invade France and overthrow the Cardinal. The Dukes de Bouillon and de Guise were in the plot and Lorraine was willing to join in the hope of regaining certain fortresses seized by Richelieu. Soissons wanted the help of Spain in his enterprise, and it was with this object that Campion was sent to Brussels to enlist the help of the Duchess de Chevreuse.

Campion came, saw and was conquered. He also achieved some success in his wooing, if we are to accept as evidence the sarcastic congratulations in Soisson's letters. He was less successful in his mission. Marie was a veteran player of the game and had no use for these amateurish efforts. She thought it wiser to wait a little while before making the attempt. Louis was in very poor health and his death would solve many problems. She pointed out that a little patience might save trouble and insure success.

Soissons wanted help, not good advice, and he replied to her sane counsel with impatient rudeness. Campion at once took up the cudgels in her behalf. He assured the Count repeatedly that Madame de Chevreuse had already done much for him: "She has written to the Archduke so that you will have his assistance and she has entire power over Antonio Sarmiento. She is very zealous for you and charges herself with furthering your affairs as though they were her own."

Soissons would not listen. He craved action and was egged on by Puylaurens, Gaston's friend and adviser. With the avowed intention of overthrowing the government and putting Gaston on the throne, the Count marched into France at the head of a small army, eked out by Spanish troops. A pitched battle was fought at La Marfee between the rebels and a small royalist force. The rebels were victorious, but a chance bullet put an end to the hectic career of Soissons. With the leader dead, the rebellion collapsed. Guise fled, Bouillon was imprisoned and peace reigned again.

Nothing daunted by this disaster, Marie went steadily on with her plans. At this stage in the game, Cinq Mars took a hand and things became interesting.

Confident of his power over the King, the young favorite had begun to attack the Cardinal openly. To his delight, Louis did not check him. Cinq Mars was too feather-brained to study the secretive nature of his patron and fell into the same error as Marie de Medici had made before him. Assuming that Louis' silence was

a tacit agreement, he became reckless in his denunciations and even discussed plans for removing the Cardinal. Louis listened, smiled and remained non-committal.

Finally Cinq Mars went so far as to ask Troisville, the Captain of the musketeers, if he would kill Richelieu. That blunt soldier replied that "murder was really not his business but it would be if the King commanded him to make it so." It was balm to Louis' vanity to find such loyalty to his person. He beamed on the Captain, thanked him for his devotion and—failed to give him the order. Cinq Mars ignored this significant omission. He swaggered about the Court explaining loudly what he would do when the Cardinal was no longer in the way. Still Louis made no sign and Marie de Gonzaga wrote to her lover from Paris: "Your plans are as well known here as that the Seine flows under the Pont Neuf."

Not being either deaf nor half-witted, Richelieu knew that there was mischief afoot but could not learn the actual details. He could only bide his time and give Cinq Mars enough rope to hang himself with. The young cockerel seemed in a fair way to do it. His conceit was limitless, and without the salutory restraint formerly exercised by the Cardinal, he was slowly but surely antagonizing Louis himself. He had already won the cordial detestation of the other courtiers and it was at this time that the Duke d'Enghien wrote to his father, the Duke de Condé: "Monsieur le Grand is going from bad to worse and even the King is beginning to tire of him."

This was the picture at Court during the autumn and winter of 1641. In Brussels Marie was working with the skill of long experience and the web of intrigue was spreading. A valuable recruit to the band of plotters was the hunchback Count de Fontrailles. Richelieu had once made a cruelly sarcastic comment on his deformity and Fontrailles hated him with a bitterness made formidable by an unusually keen brain.

In January Fontrailles made his way to Spain, disguised as a monk, with letters of introduction from Marie de Chevreuse. He discussed the plot with King Phillip and came back in triumph with a formal treaty of alliance. In it Spain promised to support with money and troops Gaston's attempt to seize the throne. In exchange, all territories won from Spain in the war were to be returned. On behalf of the plotters this treaty was signed by Cinq Mars and Gaston himself.

One of the few who was in the secret was the Marquis de Thou, son of the great historian. In spite of the fact that he was an intimate friend of Cinq Mars, de Thou was a serious-minded youth and an ardent patriot. His studies in political science had convinced him that the absolute power of Richelieu was a menace to the State. On those grounds he was in favor of his overthrow, but deprecated violence and was strongly opposed to the intervention of a foreign power.

De Thou denounced the treaty with Spain as black treason and begged Cinq Mars to withdraw from the whole affair. He even threatened to warn the authorities, but Cinq Mars laughed at him. He

knew that his friend would never betray him. Another reason for silence was the fact that de Thou had at one time been the ardent admirer, perhaps the lover, of Marie de Chevreuse.

The plans of the conspirators were almost complete. Zero hour was at hand and still, marvellous to relate, Richelieu was in the dark. He was perfectly aware, of course, that a plot was being hatched. He even knew the names of many involved, but he had no evidence and feared to strike before the time was ripe.

For years the Minister had been subjecting his frail body to a terrific strain. Day in and day out, year in and year out, he had labored indefatigably with never more than three hours sleep a night. Racking headaches and recurrent internal abcesses had added to the nervous strain. Now, at this crisis in his career, his system gave way. Virulent boils broke out all over his body. His whole right side was a flaming mass of agony and his arm was so ulcerated that he could not hold a pen.

Richelieu was at Narbonne, when this last affliction overtook him, and that insignificant town automatically became the temporary capital of France. Helpless and in agony as he was, his indomitable will rose superior to bodily weakness. A regiment of secretaries wrote at his dictation, a battalion of orderlies carried his commands all over the country. From his bed the Cardinal governed France, manipulated his armies and carried on diplomatic relations with the Courts of Europe. He even interviewed his secret agents and spurred them on to greater efforts. There was mischief afoot. Let them

see to it that he was not taken unawares. Every breath was torture, every movement a separate agony, but Richelieu carried on. At St. Germains, the King weeded his garden and made candy.

Scenario writers stress the dramatic value of suspense. Richelieu's career, judged from that angle, was one long melodrama. For a few days the fate of France hung trembling in the balance. If the conspirators had struck then, their chances of success were fifty to one. Cinq Mars and Fontrailles were even discussing a private plan of their own to assassinate the Cardinal while he was helpless. While they plotted, their opportunity slipped away.

From Spain arrived a barefoot monk, his habit grey with the dust of the long road. He was given audience with the Cardinal and produced from under his robe a paper which changed the whole aspect of affairs.

Fontrailles, disguised as a monk, had brought the treaty from Spain. One of Richelieu's agents, also disguised as a monk, had just brought his master a facsimile. How he got it remains a mystery, but in all probability the credit, or the blame, belongs to some underling in the Spanish Foreign Office who was in French pay.

On May 3 Richelieu had made his will and prepared for death. That precious, dangerous bit of paper gave him a new lease on life. Once more his enemies were delivered into his hands, and France was saved from disaster.

He sent the treaty to Louis without comment and then acted with characteristic swiftness. The Duke de Bouillon had just been given a high command in the army in Italy. Messengers were sent to arrest him and at the same time Cinq Mars and de Thou were seized. Fontrailles, warned by some sixth sense, had already fled to Brussels. Before going he wrote to Cinq Mars: "You are a fine figure of a man and even if you were shorter by a head, you would still be tall. As for me, who am already very short, nothing could be taken from me without causing me the greatest inconvenience, and making me cut the poorest figure in the world. You will be good enough, if you please, to allow me to get out of the way of edged tools."

The witty hunchback "ran away and lived to fight another day." Cinq Mars, overestimating his popularity with the King, stayed and was caught. To Louis the proof of his favorite's treachery was both a shock and a relief. The folly and insolence of the Equerry had done much to kill the infatuation that his physical charms had inspired. For some time the gloomy King had felt resentful of the cavalier treatment he received, but did not know how to break away from his former favorite. The damning document sent by Richelieu solved his problem. When it was handed to him, he was making some sugary mess in the kitchen. Holding up the burnt saucepan he said dramatically: "His soul is as black as this pot."

Galvanized into new life by the joyous prospect of crushing the conspirators, Richelieu set out

for Arles where he was to meet the King. Louis was once again suffering from a severe attack of enteric and had himself carried, bed and all, into the room where the Cardinal awaited him. It was an emotional meeting. Louis wept copiously, apologized for his past disloyalty and vowed that he "loved him more than ever and that they had been too long together ever to be parted."

Richelieu accepted his protestations complacently and tactfully ignored the fact that Louis had been within an ace of ordering his assassination. He contented himself with demanding—and getting—a signed testimony from His Majesty as to his knowledge of the plot. Louis confessed in writing that he had listened freely to Cinq Mars' tirades against the Cardinal but stated that he had done so with the object of learning the conspirators' plans. Having thus exhibited his royal self in the unedifying rôle of a spy on one of his own subjects, Louis created Richelieu Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom and went to Paris, leaving the Minister to cope with the situation.

With his bed loaded onto a barge, Richelieu floated down the river to Lyons. Behind him was towed a small boat containing Cinq Mars, de Thou and their guards. Then came the pitiful travesty of justice. Bouillon, whose guilt was beyond all doubt, was given a free pardon for this and all past treasonous acts in exchange for his fortress of Sedan.

Gaston, the nucleus of the whole plot and the one who stood to gain most by it, ran true to form and betrayed all his associates. The letter to Richelieu in which

Richelieu's Barge

(The invalid Cardinal being transported in state, and carrying with him his prisoners, Cinq Mars and de Thou)

Richelieu's Barge

(The invalid Cardinal being transported in state, and carrying with him his prisoners, Cinq Mars and de Thou)

he offered to turn King's evidence is a masterpiece of slimy treachery. "That ungrateful Monsieur le Grand!" he exclaims, with hands uplifted in holy horror. "How guilty he is, who was under such obligations to you. I have always been on my guard against him and his intrigues. You, my cousin, have all my respect and friendship."

Gaston was too overwhelmed by the consciousness of his own rectitude to explain how his signature came to be on the treaty. Evidently his guard had slipped for the moment. The respect and friendship he professed for Richelieu was not reciprocated and this time, since he was no longer heir-apparent, he could be dealt with more harshly. Stripped of all his powers and appanages, he was allowed to retire to Blois as a private individual on a pension. On the margin of the decree is a note in Richelieu's writing: "Monsieur will have a pension of 12,000 crowns a month, the same sum that the King of Spain would have given him." Only on Cinq Mars and de Thou did the hand of justice fall heavily.

On June 12 the two lads were condemned to death and the sentence was carried out the same day. Driving to the place of execution they chatted cheerfully and drew lots for the privilege of dying first. On the scaffold they embraced with a gay cry of "Au revoir" and met death with smiling sang froid. Of Cinq Mars, as of Charles I, it might be said that "Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it."

In Paris Louis waited for the news with gloomy satisfaction. One of the "parlor tricks" with which Cinq Mars had amused his morbid master was the imitation of dying faces. As the hands of the clock pointed to the hour set for the execution, Louis said sourly: "I wonder what kind of face Monsieur le Grand is pulling now."

Richelieu had pushed on the prosecution of Cinq Mars with an energy quickened by personal animosity. He wrote in his diary "The infernal demon intended to murder me in my bed." When the handsome young head rolled from the block he felt a glow of satisfaction. Added to this was the incalculable relief of knowing that this last and greatest danger to the State had been averted. France had been spared having Gaston as its King, and Spain had been cheated of an easy victory. With a mind at rest the Cardinal could now set his affairs in order and prepare to lay down his work.

From Lyons Richelieu set out on his last journey to Paris and afforded to the people he had held in thrall an unforgettable spectacle. Along the road came strings of baggage horses, wains piled high with his household goods, a hundred or so gentlemen-in-waiting, secretaries and other members of his vast entourage. Then came a troop of his private guards in magnificent liveries. Last of all appeared a vast flat wagon on which a small room had been built. In a huge four-poster bed hung with scarlet velvet and priceless embroideries lay the great man himself, frail and fiery against the sombre hangings.

Beside him, at a small table, sat a secretary, busily writing from dictation.

So, dying but indomitable, the great Cardinal passed through France. The populace who lined the roads dimly sensed his essential greatness and paid him the tribute of spontaneous acclaim. To many he had been only a name, associated with crushing taxes, military conscription and petty tyranny. Now they saw him in the flesh and marvelled. No one could forget that pale face ravaged by suffering but bearing the seal of power in every line, those keen eyes and the arrogant, masterful mouth.

Slowly he passed by, the drivers picking their way carefully so that the tortured body should not be jarred. When the cavalcade reached a city, walls would be torn down if the gates were too narrow to admit the vast equipage. Windows would be widened and inclined planes built so that he need not be carried upstairs. Wherever possible the travelling room would be placed on a barge and carried by water.

There was something epic in that last triumphal progress. Richelieu had scattered his enemies, vindicated his policy, established his supremacy. Now he was returning to render an account of his stewardship and lay his weary bones to rest.

Eager to show his gratitude to the man whose unsleeping vigilance had saved his crown, Louis came as far as Fontainebleau to meet him. Together they entered Paris in state, reigning priest and puppet king.

Never again would Louis try to assert himself. Richelieu had conquered and would be supreme until the end.

Once back at the Palais Cardinal, he devoted himself to consolidating his life work and arranging for the continuance of his policies. Louis was with him every day, receiving his instructions. A third person at these conferences was Mazarin, now the Cardinal's right-hand man. Together they made plans for the future and Richelieu appointed men to do the work he had accomplished single handed. At last only three important things were left to be done. Richelieu felt that Gaston was an ever-present danger and wanted to leave him powerless to upset the dynasty. He induced Louis to issue a formal decree excluding Gaston from ever holding a position of authority in the kingdom.

Secondly, he urged the King to appoint the young Duke d'Enghien to the supreme command of the army. Louis demurred, pointed out that Enghien was barely of age and suggested more mature generals. Richelieu insisted and finally won the King's grudging consent. Lastly the Cardinal begged Louis to accept Mazarin as his chief adviser. The young secretary had worked closely with his master for years, knew his wishes and understood his methods. Louis agreed and Richelieu was ready to die in the assurance that he had arranged for all possible contingencies.

Anne came in those last days, weeping a little and ready to be friendly. After their long enmity, Cardinal and Queen were reconciled and the slate was washed clean by her facile tears. Last of all came his

confessor to administer the rites of the Church. "Do you forgive your enemies?" he asked. "I have had no enemies save those of the State," retorted Richelieu with a flash of his old fighting spirit.

On the afternoon of December 3 he felt that death was at hand. Wishing to spare his niece, Madame de Combalet, the sight of his last agony, he courteously asked her to leave the room. Then, fearless and indomitable, he died, as he had lived, alone.

When the news was brought to Louis he remarked calmly: "A great politician has departed." It was his only tribute to the man whose genius and unswerving loyalty had kept him on his throne and raised France to greatness. Behind that expressionless face was a surge of relief. He might have said, as he had said at the death of Concini twenty-five years before: "Now I am really King."

The influence of Richelieu's dominating personality was not to be lightly cast off and for a time he continued to rule from his grave. Two days after his death Louis issued a proclamation stating that he intended "to maintain all the arrangements made during the ministry of the late Cardinal and to carry out all the plans agreed upon for the conduct of affairs both at home and abroad." Mazarin was called to the Council of State, d'Enghien appointed Commander-in-Chief and all ministers confirmed in their posts. Louis dared not run counter to the will of the dead man but his feeling of relief persisted.

It was shared by the whole country. Tongues, long silent through fear, wagged with unaccustomed freedom, and the tavern poets amused themselves by writing ribald epitaphs on the great departed.

"Kind Richelieu's body here doth lie
Who never hurt a single fly,
A very just and peaceful fellow.
As for his soul—if God no better
Forgives, than he forgave his debtor—
I rather fear he's gone to Hell-o"

Madame de Motteville's comments reflect the opinion of the better element at Court: "Envy was the sole cause of public hatred because in truth he did not deserve it. In spite of his defects and the Queen's justifiable dislike, it must be said of him that he was the greatest man of our time and past ages had none who could surpass him. He had the principles of all illustrious tyrants. He ruled his designs, his thoughts, his resolutions for reasons of State and the public good, which he considered only in so far as it enhanced the authority of the King."

Others were less balanced and moderate. To the nobles he had been a scourge, a flail, an unmitigated oppression. Ignoring their ancient privileges and trampling on the polite convention that a man of noble birth was automatically immune from punishment, he had struck ruthlessly at the strongholds of aristocracy and

spattered the blue blood of France all over the landscape. Four Dukes, five Counts, a Marshal of France and the Royal Equerry had perished on the scaffold. Soissons was dead, Gaston in disgrace; among those who were in prison or exiled were the Dukes de Guise, de Vendôme and d'Epernon, Marsillac, Vitry, Bassompierre, Chateauneuf, de Jars and many another. Even women had felt the weight of his vengeance. Marie de Medici had died during the summer, a destitute exile; the Princess de Conti had died in banishment; Marie de Chevreuse, her estates confiscated, was in exile; Marion de Lorme had been driven from France for her connection with Cinq Mars, and Marie de Hautefort had been sent from Court in disgrace.

With the death of Richelieu all these victims of his absolutism saw their troubles at an end. Drawn to the border as by a magnet, exiles waited on all frontiers for permission to return. In a dozen prisons men who, through weary years, had cultivated the virtue of patient resignation became restless and chafed at their confinement. Freedom was in the air and a better day was dawning.

Louis was lonely. For years Richelieu had kept him isolated, cut off from normal friendly contacts. Gradually the King realized that there were any number of charming people, friends of former days, wandering about Europe or rotting behind stone walls. They were the victim's of Richelieu's ruthless policy and now Richelieu was dead.

Prison doors were opened, barriers raised, pardons scattered abroad. Back to Court streamed the nobles, exulting in their reinstatement, seething with revived ambition. They were welcomed by a prematurely aged King who seemed pathetically eager to be friendly. At his side they found a tall, graceful man, with ingratiating manners and a charming smile. It was Mazarin, now the adviser and intimate confidant of the King.

The Italian was in his element. For years he had been at the beck and call of Richelieu, his subtle intelligence pressed into service by a greater man than himself. Now he was tasting the sweets of power for himself and reaping the reward for years of patient preparation. He had watched his master's dealings with the nobles and thought his policy unwise. Remembering the old fable of the sun and the wind, Mazarin imagined that kindness would win what harshness had lost. Thus nobles who had been quelled and crushed by the masterful Richelieu found themselves flattered, caressed, cajoled by his successor. They expanded under the treatment and applauded the acumen of a man who could appreciate their good qualities.

Louis responded to the same deft treatment. Working with a man who was all suave deference, he rejoiced in the blissful delusion that he was governing his kingdom all by himself. He became mellow, reasonable, almost genial. Past offences were forgotten, pardons granted, concessions made. Even Gaston, who a few short months before had been formally excluded from

holding any office, was made Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom. Only two people were not included in the general love-feast, only two remained beyond the pale. They were the Sieur de Chateauneuf and Marie de Chevreuse.

CHAPTER XV

MARIE was still in Brussels, contemplating with amused disgust the failure of her latest effort to overthrow the Cardinal. Now he was dead and the long duel was over. To some extent life had lost its zest with the passing away of her pet enemy. She was only marking time until she could return to France and her Queen. Fortunately for her peace of mind, she did not know that her last intrigue had cost her what she prized most in life, the friendship of Anne of Austria.

The cabal of 1641-2 had not been, like its predecessors, a concerted effort with one object in view. It was a confused, hit-or-miss affair with too many leaders, too many motives, too little co-ordination. Marie de Chevreuse, Cinq Mars, French exiles and English royalists had a common desire to get rid of Richelieu. But only one group of the conspirators wished to put Gaston on the throne.

In one of the state papers relative to the Cinq Mars trial it was said that "Monsieur le Grand was urged on to his evil designs by the Queen-Mother, Madame de Chevreuse and the Queen of France." This is an absurd statement, and directly at variance with the facts. Anne would have been delighted to see Richelieu overthrown but she had no object in advancing the claims

of Gaston. Quite the contrary. As mother of the heir-apparent, she was all in favor of leaving things severely alone. Louis might die at any moment and she would then be Queen-Regent, reigning for her little son. By conspiracy she had nothing to gain and everything to lose.

Stupid in many ways, Anne was shrewd enough to see on which side her bread was buttered, and Mazarin was always at her elbow to prompt her with sapient advice.

Since the birth of her sons, her conduct had been exemplary. She had showered smiles on Richelieu, treated her husband with docile respect and been a model of matronly discretion. It had been most disconcerting to have a conspiracy blow up in her very face, and the thought of being associated with it in any way terrified her.

Anxious to keep her own skirts clear of suspicion, Anne went to Louis and loudly denounced the intriguers. In particular, she criticized her friend, Marie de Chevreuse. She told Louis that she had "never before realized her true character," and added virtuously, "she never wished to see such a woman again." Louis had his doubts of her sincerity but merely grunted non-committally. He was so amiable these days that even his wife shared in the general benison.

The immediate result of his tolerant attitude was a rise in the Queen's stock. As the mother of the future King, she became a person of importance, one worth cultivation. With an eye to the main chance, the

courtiers surrounded her with flattering homage. Guided by Mazarin, Anne responded with gracious charm, and took particular pains to win those who might be useful to her in the future. Her precarious career of intrigue and illicit romance was forgotten and a tactful veil drawn over her dubious past. Her future at least was immaculate.

For four months universal amity continued. During that time the Court was gayer than it had been for years. The menacing shadow of the Cardinal had been lifted and society rejoiced in the sun of royal favor. Great mansions, long closed because their owners were exiled or in disgrace, were flung open, and life was a round of gaiety. The King and Queen had left the gloomy, unsanitary old Louvre and were installed in Richelieu's magnificent palace, now known as the Palais Royal. Gorgeous in silks and laces, gay with jewels and fluttering ribbons, gallants and ladies strolled through the broad corridors or gathered in the gilded salons. Lighthearted laughter rang through rooms where once the Cardinal's frown had commanded awed silence. Louis pottered about happily and transacted his business with the minimum of trouble. With such an assistant as Mazarin, kingship was a sinecure and he found himself enjoying life for the first time in many a weary year. It was a delightful interlude, too good to last.

April came, the loveliest season of the year in Paris but always a dangerous time for the King. He succumbed to yet another attack of enteric, and it was to be his last. He was at St. Germains when he fell ill and took to his bed there, never to leave it. Any slim

chance of recovery he might have had was soon destroyed by his physicians. Always with the best intentions they worked their will on his feeble body, alternately filling it with pestilential drugs and emptying it with powerful purges. In the intervals they bled him, thus robbing him of what little vitality had survived their drastic methods.

With stubborn tenacity Louis clung to life for six weeks, but his new-found amiability soon faded under the treatment. The old sullen rancor returned to dictate all his last actions. All his life had been embittered by intrigue and conspiracy. On his death bed he endeavored to protect France from any further trouble of this nature.

Towards his wife he cherished a deep and unalterable dislike. She had conspired against France, been unfaithful to her marriage vows and plotted his death. In his last hours he attempted to shut her out from any authority in the Kingdom. Laboriously he drew up plans for a Council of Regency, so constituted that she would be a mere figure-head.

That done, he made his will and, in doing it, showed all his old unforgiving malice. This curious document is interesting as proof of the importance of Marie de Chevreuse in the eyes of those unfortunate enough to feel her opposition. It reads, in part:

". . . Inasmuch as, for grave reasons, We have been obliged to deprive the Sieur de Chateauneuf of the office of Keeper of the Seals, and to confine him in the Citadel of Angoulême, We will and declare that the said Sieur de Chateauneuf shall remain in the

same state until after peace is declared, with the proviso that he shall not then be liberated except with the order of the Dame Regent and Council . . . and as it is Our design to provide against all the subjects who may in any way disturb the judicious arrangements We have made to preserve the repose and tranquillity of the State, the knowledge We possess of the rebellious conduct of Madame de Chevreuse . . . of the artifices she has used to to excite dissension in Our realm . . . causes Us to deem it proper to forbid her, as We do forbid her, the entrance to Our kingdom during the War, and thereafter only with the orders of the Dame Regent and Council with the proviso that she shall neither reside nor remain in any place near the Court or the Dame Queen."

Louis was very weak when this astounding document was brought to him to be signed. The sight of it gave him an access of energy. Pointing a trembling figure at the passage referring to Marie, he croaked: "She's the devil, the very devil." In the next room Chevreuse heard this flattering reference to his wife. It was a bad omen for the family prospects but the Duke was not the man to meet trouble half way. The King would soon be dead and no one knew what might happen after that. In the meantime, he only wished that His Majesty would not be "such an unconscionably long time in dying."

The Duke's feelings were shared by the entire Court. For days and weeks they had hung about the hunting lodge at St. Germains, waiting for the end. The humble room where the King lay dying was far too

small for the crowd of physicians, attendants and gentlemen-in-waiting. The overflow filled the anteroom, lounged in the corridors or whiled away the time playing cards in obscure corners. In the courtyard coaches stood ready for the drive to Paris and a mob of lackeys quarrelled and fidgeted as they waited for their masters. Several times before Louis had been at death's door and had miraculously recovered. Of all that throng of sycophants not one would risk leaving, lest the King should recover and notice his absence.

The strain of waiting was hardest of all on Anne. Throughout her husband's illness she fluttered about his bedside, weeping and playing the part of a devoted wife. There was a Regency at stake. Repeatedly she assured Louis of her love for him and her innocence of any intrigues in the past. He remained stubbornly unconvinced and continued to accuse her of wanting to kill him so that she could marry Gaston. In vain she burst into floods of dramatic tears. He would only sneer and wave her aside.

Towards the end, Louis sank into a coma, but there was one last flicker of life. Sitting up in bed one day, he pointed to the opposite wall. "Look," he exclaimed, in great excitement, "do you not see Monsieur le Duc giving battle to the Spaniards? Lord God, how he is trouncing them! I was right to give him the command of my armies though they tried to prevent me." To the last Louis was claiming credit that belonged to a greater man. The Duke he referred to was Enghien, who had been appointed at Richelieu's dying request.

The King appears to have had some sort of clairvoyant vision. Ten days later the young general won a decisive victory at Rocroi, where he destroyed the flower of the Spanish army. Louis did not live to hear the news. For years he had watched his armies struggle with monotonous lack of success. With his usual luck he died just before the greatest victory of the war.

No one noticed the exact moment when he breathed his last. The watchers were in a stupor from sheer boredom. Then the word went out that Louis the Chaste was no more. "The King is dead. Long live the King." In a moment the Palace was in a turmoil, courtiers jostling each other in the doorways, shouting wildly for their horses and coaches. At the Palais Royal was a little boy who was now Louis XIV. Here was only a corpse. Fame and fortune waited the first man to make himself agreeable to the new King. "To Paris, Jacques, and spare not the horses."

The road to the city was black with swaying coaches and galloping horsemen. The courtyard was empty and, in that dim room, lit only by a few guttering candles, Louis XIII lay alone, a sardonic smile on his face.

Anne too had gone. With a sigh of relief, perhaps the first sincere sigh in weeks, she left the room without a backward glance and took the road to Paris. Later in the evening a Lieutenant of the Guard and a few troopers entered to keep the death watch. Despised in life, Louis was neglected in death. It only remained for some scribbler to sum up his inglorious career in an epigram:

"The King was valet to a priest
And played his part without disaster.
He'd all the virtues of a man,
But never one that makes a master."

At St. Germains darkness gathered around the old building and a deathly stillness filled the deserted rooms. At the Palais Royal all was clamor and light. Hundreds of candles flashed from the walls and were reflected in the gilded mirrors. The rooms were filled with a chattering mob of courtiers and every moment more arrived, still breathless from their wild race from St. Germains.

In the centre of the babbling throng was the baby King, wakened from sleep to receive the homage of the nobles. Yawning dismally, he wondered what it was all about, while his temporary guardian, the Duke de Beaufort, swaggered about and did the honors. Anne entered accompanied by Mazarin and at once found herself the cynosure of all eyes. The Court pressed forward to kiss her hand, to express their homage, to crave her favor. It was a glorious moment, but Anne was a desperately weary woman. The endless vigil and the long drive had exhausted her, and she begged to be left alone.

At once Beaufort took command of the situation and peremptorily ordered everyone out of the room. The clamor broke out anew. By what right did he give commands? Who gave him authority over his betters? etc., etc. Hands flew to sword-hilts, voices grew shrill, a crisis was imminent. Finally Mazarin quelled

the rising storm and cleared the room. Last of all went Beaufort, strutting like a turkey cock. The Regency of Anne had begun and that petty scene was both a symptom and a symbol of the troubles ahead.

Only a prophet—or a Richelieu—could have foreseen that trouble. To the Court and the country as a whole the future seemed cloudless. Ruthless Cardinal and gloomy King had passed away. In their place was a beautiful Queen, gracious and smiling. A bonny little King succeeded to the throne with a younger brother as insurance against rival claimants. France felt that a golden age was beginning.

Then, like a happy omen, came the news of the victory of Rocroi. Paris went mad with joy, and Anne drove through the city with her little sons to Notre Dame where a solemn Te Deum was sung. That same afternoon she appeared before the Parliament of Paris, accompanied by the Duke de Chevreuse, who, as Grand Chamberlain of France, bore the infant King to his first *lit de justice*. Lovely in her regal robes, Anne stood smiling while the loyal legislators paid homage to their little sovereign. Then, still smiling, she heard them unanimously appoint her Queen-Regent "with full, entire and absolute authority."

Louis would have turned in his grave but the unfortunate man had no grave to turn in. As King, husband and pseudo-father, his life had been a dismal fiasco. In death he was ignored and at his own funeral he was an also-ran—a nonentity. While he was lying in state some diligent official discovered that Henry IV had

not yet been formally interred. Louis XIII was obliged to wait meekly until his father's tomb was completed. Then the two Kings were buried in due order of precedence.

The same pathetic futility dogged Louis' dying efforts. The Council of Regency, so carefully designed to limit Anne's power, had been set aside within a week. In his will, he had solemnly doomed Marie de Chevreuse to perpetual banishment from Court. One month later she returned in triumph and took her accustomed place at the Queen's side.

A month is a short time, but to Marie it seemed endless. For five years she had wandered about Europe, a homeless exile, or had endured the boredom of existence in the Netherlands. "In Paris one lives, elsewhere one merely vegetates." The atmosphere of Courts was the very breath of her aristocratic little nostrils. With every fibre of her being she longed for the spice of scandal, the rapier-play of courtly wit, the thrill of polite intrigue. To a lesser degree, she wanted to be re-united with her children and to establish the fallen fortunes of her family on a sure foundation.

As soon as the welcome tidings of the King's death reached her, she hastily packed up her possessions and made ready for the return to France. Louis had forbidden it, but what of it? Pouff! Anne was now the Queen. Anne, the sharer in many a perilous escapade, the devoted friend of years. The commands of the dead man were of no importance.

Within a few days Marie's preparations were made, and she only waited for the official permis-

sion to return. Unaccountably, it did not come. Day after day passed but no word reached her from the Queen. Hurt and bewildered by the delay, Marie wrote to her friends at Court. Why was she not recalled? Why the long silence? What in the name of a thousand minutely-described *petits chiens* was happening?

In her exile, Marie had lost touch with the intricate cross-currents that were turning the Court into a political maelstrom. Anne was the bewildered centre of a swirling eddy of parties and individuals, each pulling for himself, each pulling a different way. She was besieged by sycophants, deafened with petitions, smothered with fawning adulation.

Parties were formed with great nobles as their rallying point. A favor granted to one meant the enmity of the other. Each fought savagely for prestige and the Court was split into a dozen warring factions. Immediately after the King's death, Anne had appointed Mazarin her Minister of State. It was a clever move. By it, she avoided arousing the jealousy of any particular party and at the same time won for herself the support of the astute Italian. Together they picked their way through the intricate maze, played one party off against the other and preserved their equilibrium.

The new favorite was not slow to profit by his position. A master of subtle technique, he applied himself with consummate skill to the conquest of his Queen. By relieving her of all routine duties, he made sovereignty a pleasant task, but he was careful not to assume too much authority. He was always at her side to

counsel or assist but it was with an engaging air of deference. When any difficult problem arose he was ready with a diplomatic solution, and he supplied her with phrases that were tactfully non-committal.

Even while he dominated her, he was fulsome in his praise of her wisdom, ecstatic in his admiration of her regal qualities. It is not surprising that he soon had Anne completely under his spell. Beneath his magnetic charm and ingratiating manner, Mazarin had an ambition as soaring as that of Richelieu. He wanted power and realized that it could be gained most surely through the Queen. Where Richelieu had treated her with tyrannous harshness, Mazarin flattered and adored. Anne expanded under the new treatment like a flower in the sun. Rather a full-blown blossom, perhaps, but Mazarin was not disposed to be critical. The short cut to power was by way of the royal bed and his foot was already on the first step leading to that scented nest.

Throughout his career he kept a private diary written in three languages and it reveals his intentions with illuminating frankness. French and Italian were used for political purposes but the progress of his amorous campaign was noted in Spanish.

Mazarin was not without rivals. There were Comminges, for instance, the handsome Captain of the guard, and the debonair Duke de Beaufort, with his ardent blue eyes and the sunny curls tumbling about his shoulders. The Italian realized that Anne was susceptible to masculine beauty and played up accordingly. He spent hours curling and arranging his luxuriant chestnut hair.

He invented special cosmetics for preserving his silken skin and went about fragrant with all the perfumes of Araby.

Watching his steady advance in the Queen's favor, the nobles decided that the suave Italian was a man to cultivate. His new honors did not appear to have turned his head. He was always most servile and licked each aristocratic boot with a beautiful impartiality. Whenever he was asked to use his influence with the Queen, he professed himself "Monseigneur's humble, obedient servant to command" and seemed eager to ingratiate himself. So subtly did he worm his way into power that he was firmly established before the nobles had begun to take him seriously.

To quote de Retz: "He played his cards so well that he had his foot on everybody's head while everyone thought he was still standing beside him. . . . France saw a humble and benignant being sitting on the steps of the throne from which the harsh and redoubtable Richelieu had blasted rather than governed men."

While Mazarin had been steadily climbing the ladder of ambition, the nobles had wasted their time in bickering and had finally split into two main factions. One was headed by Beaufort, son of the Duke de Vendôme; the other was grouped around the immensely powerful House of Bourbon-Condé. Old Condé himself, while one of the wealthiest men in France, had been thoroughly cowed by Richelieu and was a political cipher, crouching over his money bags. His son, however, was famous all over France as the victorious general

of Rocroi. Another son was the Prince de Conti, a pleasant but negligible youth. His daughter, Anne Genevieve, was one of the great beauties of the day and had recently married the Duke de Longueville who ranked among the half-dozen greatest peers of France. The Duchess de Condé herself was a Montmorenci, sister of the beheaded Duke, and the Queen's intimate friend. As a group, therefore, the Condé faction represented the flower of the *haute noblesse* and wielded almost unlimited influence.

Such was the position of affairs at Court while Marie's return was under discussion. Anne herself admitted frankly that she did not want her back. She confided to the Duchess de Condé that she "had no taste now for the amusements that had bound them together and feared lest she might appear changed to her." To another friend she said that she "knew by her own experience how well able Madame de Chevreuse was to disturb the peace of the Regency."

Unfortunately for Anne, the "peace of the Regency" was purely superficial. Feeling between the two factions was running high and the fate of Marie de Chevreuse was rapidly becoming a matter of acute interest to the rival clans. The Condé party were strongly opposed to her return. Between the House of Bourbon-Condé and the House of Guise, to which Marie belonged by marriage, there was a feud dating back to the Wars of Religion. Further, the Condés blamed her for her share in the conspiracy in which Montmorenci had been involved. Above all, she was the champion of Chateauneuf, the

depraved creature who had presided over the commission that condemned the Duke to death. Between Charlotte de Montmorenci, Duchess de Condé, and any friend of Chateauneuf, it was war to the knife.

The Vendôme faction, on the other hand, were eager for the return of the intriguing Duchess. Vendôme himself had been her fellow-conspirator during the late régime and had found her an able ally. Rochefoucauld was one of this group, as were the Duke de Guise and members of her husband's house. As the friend of the Queen her influence was valuable and her own genius for intrigue would make her a real asset.

As Rochefoucauld puts it in his memoirs: "The Court was so divided that the return of Madame de Chevreuse was being waited for to decide everything. She was not looked on as a person who would be satisfied with supporting one side, but as one who would most certainly destroy whichever side was least connected with her."

With all this plot and counter-plot, it is hardly surprising that a month slipped by before Marie received the summons to return. It was Mazarin himself who finally persuaded Anne to send for her former favorite. He, too, felt that the Duchess was the key to the situation but he intended to win her for himself. Confident of his powers to charm such a merry and amorous dame, he had rosy visions of driving Marie and Anne in double harness. The Duchess would oust Madame Condé from the Queen's side and at the same time help him to hold the Vendômes in check. The mutual

admiration society of three would steer the ship of State safely through the troubled waters and all would be well.

Aglow with his vision, Mazarin advised the Queen to recall Madame de Chevreuse. She consented reluctantly, but resolved that there should be no more intrigues. If Marie returned, it must be on condition that she behaved herself, and on the clear understanding that the old intimacy was a thing of the past. Casting about for an ambassador who would explain the situation tactfully, Anne selected Rochefoucauld. To her surprise he received her commands with wrathful indignation. He reminded her of Marie's fidelity to her cause, her life-long devotion and the misfortunes she had suffered for her Queen. "I entreated her," he writes, "to consider of what fickleness she would be thought capable and of what interpretation would be put on that fickleness should she prefer Mazarin to Madame de Chevreuse. The conversation was long and stormy, and I saw clearly that I had incensed her."

Anne was easily incensed these days and she found her old friends a trial. They would insist on reminding her of things that she infinitely preferred to forget, and presumed on past services to speak to her more bluntly than she liked. Anne had a truly royal ability to forget past benefits and chafed under the obligations of gratitude. She would gladly have allowed Marie de Chevreuse to live and die in exile but Mazarin had over-persuaded her. Now it was too late to recall the summons.

Rochefoucauld went on his mission but it was as a friend of the returning exile. He wanted to warn her of the Queen's attitude and to prepare her for the struggle ahead. With him went another old friend, Montagu, the bearer of the fatal little black bag at Bar-le-Duc. The Englishman had a genius for diplomacy and had been selected as Mazarin's envoy to the Duchess. He bore letters welcoming her to France, bespeaking her friendship and offering to pay her debts.

Early in June Marie received the belated but gracious summons to return. At once she set out for her beloved Paris, and her journey resolved itself into a triumphal progress, with lovers at every milestone. Enthusiastic friends saw her off from Brussels and the amorous Antonio Sarmiento accompanied her on the first stage of the journey. At Peronne Alexandre Campion appeared and cheered his lady on her way. At Roye she found Rochefoucauld and the dapper Montagu.

It was a joyous reunion, rich in memories of past loves and dangers, but the messages and letters of the two envoys soon cast a gloom over their gaiety.

Rochefoucauld painted a dismal picture of the state of affairs at Court and warned his friend, most solemnly, of the necessity of discretion. He described the political situation, prepared her for the change in the Queen and hinted delicately at the ambiguous position of Mazarin in Anne's esteem. It was unfortunate for Montagu that he was obliged to follow his fellow-envoy. In spite of all his tact, Marie was in no mood to receive

friendly overtures from the Italian who had taken her place with the Queen. Montagu did his best, but Mazarin's own letters spoiled the whole effect. They were altogether too revealing. They crawled and fawned and dripped flattery. They betrayed the Cardinal's frantic desire to win the Duchess to his own side and capped the climax by offering her money to pay her debts.

At this bare-faced attempt at bribery, Marie flew into a royal rage. "Who," she demanded in a voice choked with fury, "is this impudent lackey who dares to offer money to a Rohan? The insolent, boot-licking, slimy, etc., etc." Madame la Duchesse was famed for her command of language and she poured out all the rich treasures of her vocabulary in an attempt to express her feelings. Montagu, aghast at the storm he had raised, tried to pacify her, but in vain. Marie raged and swore, vowed vengeance and called on high heaven to witness that she would not rest until this worm was back in the gutter whence he had crawled. In despair Montagu called on Rochefoucauld to reason with the infuriated lady. Something must be done to quell the riot. It was altogether too distressing to a diplomat.

From the purely political point of view, Rochefoucauld was glad to find that Mazarin had made another enemy but he was primarily a true friend to Marie. For her own sake she must at least feign friendship for the Queen's new favorite. It was the only path to power in these degenerate days. Using every argument at his command he at last persuaded Marie to hide her

true feelings. Subtlety was the only weapon that could avail her now. Open antagonism to Mazarin meant the disfavor of the Queen.

After her first outburst, Marie listened quietly to Rochefoucauld and promised to follow his advice. She would be the soul of discretion and give Anne no reason to regret her recall. As an earnest of her good intentions, she returned a polite answer to Mazarin's letter and appeared to accept his olive branch. Montagu went on ahead and Marie continued her journey, but the thrill of anticipation was gone. The happy intimacy with Anne was a thing of the past. From now on, it would be a struggle for favor against a rival who must be placated because he could not be fought openly.

It was a dreary prospect but Marie was ever ready for a good fight. She had fought Richelieu for twenty years and asked no quarter. Now he was dead but another Cardinal had come to take his place. Mazarin was an intriguer, but so was she. She would meet him on his own ground, pit her wits against his and might the best man win. The fight was on.

At Compiegne Chevreuse appeared, almost incoherent with relief at regaining his wife. Now he felt that his troubles were over and the family fortunes would improve. With him were half the noblesse of France, come to pay their respects to the most popular woman in Europe. The centre of a cheering crowd of friends, Marie entered Paris like a conquering hero. Her five year exile was over.

That week the Gazette, the official Court circular, devoted most of its space to the return of the heroine. In a pyrotechnic shower of adjectives it described her triumphal entry into the city, expatiated on her romantic adventures and presaged a return to the gay days of old. The account concluded: "But the great retinue of Court nobles who visit her constantly, and fill her spacious Palace to overflowing does not inspire one with such admiration as the fact that neither the fatigues of her long journeyings, nor the ills of her rigorous fortune have wrought any change in her natural magnanimity nor, which is more extraordinary, in her great beauty."

"Age cannot wither, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety."

The astounding woman was now forty-three. The bewildering beauty was there but it was refined, enriched by maturity. In place of the old impish mischief there was wit, not untinged with irony, humor ripened by experience. Twenty years of incessant intrigue had perfected her technique and made her a woman of infinite tact. She was superlatively well equipped for the part she was to play in the tangled politics of the Fronde. At an age when many women look back on their active pasts with a wistful smile, Marie was just entering on a career compared to which her life up to this time was comparatively puerile.

Marie de Chevreuse intrigued as naturally and inevitably as she breathed, but in the past she had

plotted recklessly for the sake of a friend. Now the impassioned devotion to Anne that had been her ruling motive had cooled. From now on she would work for herself, her family, her party. No longer swayed by emotion, she would play the great game of politics as she played chess, with cool intelligence. She was going into battle with all her wits about her, charm her weapon and humor her shield. She began by attacking the Queen's Bishop. She ended by crying "Check!" to the Queen.

The enthusiastic chronicler of the Gazette wrote that Marie had not lost either her magnanimity nor her beauty. The same could not be said of the Queen. Five years before, Anne had been a nonentity, ignored by the Court, hated by the King and cowed into submission by Richelieu. Marie had taken into exile with her the picture of a wistful, helpless creature, the victim of an intolerable tyranny.

She returned to find a Queen Paramount who knew her own mind and wanted her own way. The slender figure had become portly. The mild eyes flashed imperiously and the once low voice was now raised in shrill anger at the least hint of opposition. Anne of Austria was a Hapsburg with the blood of a hundred tyrants in her veins. She was the Queen and her will was law.

The fact that she was persecuted by Richelieu and neglected by her husband had made Anne a martyr in the eyes of the populace. They pictured her the innocent victim of unjust suspicion, the saintly pat-

Anne of Austria
(Rubens. Orado, Madrid)

Anne of Austria
(Rubens. Orado, Madrid)

tern of gracious womanhood. In a very short time Anne shattered this fond delusion. Both Court and Parliament found that the apparently mild woman had the obstinacy of an army mule. As long as they agreed with her, she was graciousness itself. Woe betide the luckless wight who ventured to disagree. Only Mazarin could reason with her when her passions were aroused or change her opinion when her mind was once made up.

Marie de Chevreuse and Anne had parted with tears and vows of eternal friendship. They met amiably, coolly, and with a meticulous observance of etiquette. Anne was nervous beneath her regal manner. She dreaded a "scene" and wished to combine friendliness with the correct degree of aloof dignity proper to her position. Marie, on the contrary was quite at her ease and handled the situation with flawless tact. A Rohan with centuries of fine breeding behind her, she moved through the Court with effortless grace and greeted Anne with calm courtesy.

In her well-turned phrases there was no hint of undue familiarity. Tacitly she informed the Queen that she accepted the new state of affairs and had no intention of presuming on past favors. With the same nonchalant charm she met Mazarin and assured him of her friendship. Then, formalities over, she turned to join her friends of former days. Marie de Hautefort was there, recalled even before the King's death. So were the Chevalier de Jars, still limping, Seguier, whose warning had saved Anne at Val de Grace, and many another. Rapturously they greeted Marie and reminisced about

the adventurous past, but Marie was too wise to identify herself wholly with this group. She shared their feelings of jealousy and despairing disgust at the new order of things but dared not show it. If Mazarin were to be toppled from his perch on the steps of the throne, it must be done with care, and she must bring up bigger artillery.

With all her old shrewdness, Marie considered the situation, reckoned up the forces at her command and studied the strength of the enemy. Of the two principal factions, she tended naturally to that of the Vendômes, drawn alike by family association and the bonds of adventures shared in the past. Inevitably she would be on that side in any open warfare but for the moment she hesitated to declare herself. To do so would invite the enmity of the Condé clan and that would be disastrous. She must first accomplish something that was very near her heart, the release and reinstatement of Chateauneuf.

It was ten years since Marie had written: "Though all the world should neglect you, I will continue to esteem you so highly all my life that you shall have every reason to be content with your fortune." The unfortunate Keeper of the Seals was still a prisoner in the fortress of Angoulême, neglected and forgotten by everyone but the woman he had loved with such disastrous results. During her exile, Marie had been powerless to help him. Her first thought on returning to France was to restore him to his former estate, and she set to work without a moment's delay.

Mazarin wanted her friendship. Mazarin could have it, but he must pay for it. Not in the coin that he had offered so confidently, but in this trifling matter of releasing an old friend from unjust imprisonment. Marie smiled sweetly; Mazarin wriggled uneasily. Nothing would please him more than doing this favor for Madame; it should be done at once, but—how about the Duchess de Condé? That, Marie inferred, was a matter of no importance. The poor prisoner could at least be released and allowed to return to his home after all these years. No one could object to that.

Vastly relieved, Mazarin leaped at this solution and at once ordered Chateauneuf to be released. He thought his troubles were over but he did not yet know Madame de Chevreuse. He was to know her only too well before he was through. Her main point gained, Marie called up the reserves. The Chevalier de Jars limped to the Cardinal and began interceding for his old comrade. Why could Chateauneuf not be given some small place at Court to repay him for all his sufferings? Again Mazarin wriggled, hesitated, played for time. He was desperately anxious to ingratiate himself with Madame de Chevreuse but dared not arouse the wrath of the redoubtable Duchess de Condé.

In an attempt to muzzle de Jars, he gave him two fine abbeys and prayed that he had heard the last of him. De Jars accepted the gift but returned to the attack with unabated zeal. Mazarin, who would have sold his hopes of heaven for a fair price, cash down, could not understand this passionate interest in a man

who had nothing to give. He "saw with vexation that the two fine abbeys he had given to de Jars did not make him less partial to his friend from whom he had received nothing."

Back again to plague him came Marie de Chevreuse, astonished at his reluctance to grant such a trifling request. She vowed that she thought it most unfriendly of him. Had all his protestations of readiness to serve her been mere empty phrases? Must she conclude that he trembled at the frown of Madame Condé? At this Mazarin took fright. The mere hint that he was pro-Condé would bring the Vendômes out against him in full force and upset the apple-cart. Marie got her way and Chateauneuf found himself at Court again, Chancellor of France. It was first blood for Madame de Chevreuse.

CHAPTER XVI

WITH Chateauneuf back at Court, Marie looked about for new worlds to conquer. This game she was playing with Mazarin had its humors. He wanted her support and angled for it with shameless eagerness. He even made love to her. Marie listened to his vows of ardent affection with flattering attention and stored up his words in her very excellent memory. Later she would be able to compare notes with her sister-in-law, the Princess of Guéméné. The artless Cardinal, confident of his flawless technique, was trying to win both ladies by his amorous advances. Being very good friends they derived much amusement from the situation. Anne failed to see anything humorous about it. With jealous eyes she watched the philandering of her handsome Italian and did not like it at all. Mazarin found himself treated with chilly scorn and could not understand his fall from grace.

The Duke de Beaufort, who had been rather left out in the cold, was again warmed by the royal smile. He swaggered about with all his old air of assurance, based, the gossips said, on past favors received and the lively hope of favors to come. He had been credited with the honor of fathering Phillippe of Anjou,

Anne's younger son, and certainly he treated the Queen with an easy familiarity that roused comment.

Anne's revival of kindness encouraged Beaufort to ask for the office of Lord High Admiral of France. Instead, Anne offered to appoint him Grand Equerry. Hopeful of getting the Admiralship, he refused. Marie de Chevreuse then picked a psychological moment and got a pleasant post in the royal Household for Alexandre Campion. Mazarin felt that the reins were slipping out of his hands and complained bitterly in his diary of the Queen's independence. She was giving favors and making appointments without consulting him, and he was not making any profit on these transactions. "Her Majesty ought to apply herself to the winning over of all hearts to my cause," he wrote. "She should do this by making me the agent from whose hand they receive all the favors she grants them."

Flushed by success, Marie and the Vendômes began to parcel out political plums with the bland assurance of Tammany sachems.

Beaufort was to be Admiral; Vendôme, Lord Lieutenant of Brittany; Rochefoucauld, Governor of Havre. Marie talked of buying an island off the coast of Brittany and establishing Antonio Sarmiento there, with Campion in charge. To cement the alliance, a marriage was arranged between Vendôme's younger son, the Duke de Mercoeur and Marie's daughter, Charlotte Marie de Lorraine. At this startling line-up, which would have given the party control of all northwestern France, Anne and Mazarin took alarm.

The Cardinal had promised the applicants his help in getting the posts they desired, but he actually advised Anne to refuse them. He feared that the Condé clan would take umbrage at such a wholesale grant of lucrative posts. At the same time he urged Anne to withhold her consent to the Mercoeur-Chevreuse match. It was a complicated game that he was playing, so complicated that no one knew whether he was friend or foe. A peep into the famous diary would have been enlightening.

"It is Madame de Chevreuse who animates them," he wrote. "She studies to strengthen the Vendômes. She endeavors to gain all the House of Lorraine, has already got the Duke de Guise and is attempting to win from me the Duke d'Elboeuf . . . she has a clear perception of everything. She readily divines that it is I who am acting in secret on the Queen to hinder the giving of the Government of Brittany to Vendôme. She has said so to her father, the Duke de Montbazon and also to Montagu."

She knew, he knew that she knew, she knew that he knew that she knew, but the game went merrily on. It was a battle of wits between two well-matched opponents, both cool, both wary, both skilled in delicate intrigue. What the result would have been will never be known. Into the arena, like an infuriated bull, burst the Duke de Beaufort, dragging with him a harem of silly women. What had been skilful sword-play between two finished duellists degenerated into a free-for-all, no holds barred. When the dust subsided,

Mazarin was disclosed perched on the topmost pinnacle of power. Throughout, he played a lone hand with his own profit as his objective. It was his great good fortune that he had no allies to wreck his cause.

Beaufort was the ardent wooer of the Queen but he was not the man to limit his attentions to any one woman. He had laid that golden head on many a scented pillow, fitted horns to many an aristocratic head. At the moment the acknowledged Queen of his heart was the young Duchess de Montbazon. Her romantic elopement from the convent with the elderly Duke had been but the first in a series of amorous episodes. Soissons, Montmorenci and a dozen other gallants had enjoyed her favors. Then had come a perfervid affair with the Duke de Longueville and she had had hopes of marrying him as soon as her aged husband should have shuffled off this mortal coil. Annoyingly, he lingered and a marriage was arranged between de Longueville and Anne-Genevieve de Bourbon-Condé. La Montbazon was furious and tried without success to wreck the marriage. When she failed, she consoled herself with Beaufort and was now flaunting her conquest before a Court that found her almost too generous with her gifts. Her raven hair, milky skin and thin, passionate mouth wrought havoc with the hearts of the male contingent. With the women, she was less popular. Madame de Motteville describes her in a few dry phrases: "She had extreme beauty with an extreme desire to please . . . her mind was not as fine as her body . . . her eyes imperiously demanded love." She evidently got what she wanted.

The Queen had discarded Beaufort in favor of Mazarin but she was too feminine to enjoy the speed with which he found a substitute. She eyed the black-haired Duchess with chilly disapproval and waited for a chance to humble her. Madame de Montbazon obligingly gave her royal rival an excellent opportunity, and at the same time wrecked all Marie's good work.

Outwardly, Marie and her step-mother were on the best of terms but the younger woman cherished a deep-seated grudge. She was in her twenties, in the prime of her dark beauty, but she felt herself overshadowed by her brilliant step-daughter. Marie was one of the most popular women at Court and had a European fame. Evidently intrigue rather than beauty was the secret of success. La Montbazon began to have visions of being an intriguante, swaying men by her beauty, shaking the throne to its foundations and being acclaimed as the champion wire-puller of Europe.

With Beaufort as a nucleus, the Duchess de Montbazon began to gather about her a party which was known as "The Importants." The name, it may be remarked, alluded to the importance of these gentry in their own eyes. They were a mixed bag. Some, like the hunchback, Fontrailles, had brains without character. Others, like the Count de Montresor, had energy without brains. Others again, like the Bishop of Beauvais, "most idiotic of idiots," had neither. There were dainty gentlemen who lisped in their speech, affected the extremes of fashion and walked with mincing steps. There were hot-

heads like Beaufort, swollen with a sense of their own worth.

Over this heterogeneous collection, Madame de Montbazon reigned supreme. The conspiracy into which they plunged would have sunk into the oblivion it deserved had it not been for Beaufort's connection both with it and with the Vendôme party. In his fall he involved others and his brainless folly wrecked the work of shrewder minds than his own.

Marie de Chevreuse had returned from exile in June. During the hot summer the Court intrigued, the ladies talked scandal and Marie carried on her under-cover campaign against Mazarin. Early in August, Madame de Montbazon entertained a number of aristocratic guests at her Hôtel in the Rue de Bethizy. After most of them had gone, she picked up from the floor two letters in feminine writing. They were evidently addressed to a man and were more ardent than discreet. Promptly la Montbazon announced that they were written by the Duchess de Longueville to Maurice de Coligny.

This baseless slander was a piece of sheer, unforgivable malice. The Duchess de Montbazon had never forgiven her blonde rival for winning the Duke de Longueville and leapt at this opportunity to blacken her reputation. The blue-eyed daughter of Condé had never been touched by the breath of scandal and her chaste aloofness was a standing reproach to ladies of easier virtue. The gossips fell on this delicious tid-bit with squeals of glee. The story of the anonymous billets-doux went

the rounds of the salons and was bandied about in the clubs. Sensational as it was, the story would soon have died a natural death from lack of evidence. Unfortunately for all concerned, the Duchess de Condé took the matter in hand and sallied forth to do battle for her daughter's fair name. She traced the scandal to its source and demanded an apology. When it was refused she went to the Queen. From being a harmless bit of gossip, the affair assumed the dignity of a *cause célèbre* and rocked Paris society to its foundations.

In the meantime, Rochefoucauld, with his cool intelligence, had solved the mystery. The letters had actually been written by Madame de Fouquerolles to the Marquis de Maulevrier, who had dropped them from his pocket. Rochefoucauld secured a sample of the Duchess de Longueville's writing and proved that there was no resemblance. He then burned the letters in the Queen's presence.

Still the Duchess de Condé was not satisfied. She demanded a formal, public apology from la Montbazon and won the Queen over to her point of view. There were two reasons for Anne's intervention in what was a purely personal matter. While the Duke d'Enghien was in command of her armies, she dared not antagonize his family. The second reason was less creditable. Anne was jealous of Madame de Montbazon for her conquest of Beaufort and welcomed the chance to humiliate her. The scandal-monger must apologize and Madame de Chevreuse was called on to carry through the negotiations. Madame de Motteville gives us an amusing

picture of the scene that evening in the Queen's private apartments. Mazarin and Marie, still outwardly the best of friends, sat together at a small table, drafting the speech of apology. Each word was weighed carefully, each phrase was "the subject of a parley." For a long evening these two subtle brains, each capable of governing an empire, concentrated on the settlement of a silly feminine squabble.

Finally the speech was drafted, accepted by the culprit and delivered in the presence of the Court. Honor was satisfied but the insolent, mocking manner of the Duchess de Montbazon as she delivered her speech added fuel to the fire. Feeling ran higher than ever and the Court split into factions, the women siding with the slandered Duchess, the men with the mischief-maker. Even the Duke de Longueville was in the camp of his wife's enemies. His marriage had been a *mariage de convenance* and he was still a slave to the black eyes of la Montbazon.

An open breach spelt ruin to Marie's plans and she worked hard for a reconciliation. She even succeeded by the exercise of her inimitable tact in placating the Duchess de Condé. To seal the pact, she gave a formal collation at Renart's Gardens, on the terrace of the Tuileries, with the Queen as guest of honor.

The fatal afternoon arrived. Under gay umbrellas tables were scattered about the terrace, set with dainty refreshments. All the great ladies of the Court were present, sipping chocolate or fragrant Bohea, toying with tiny cakes, chattering like magpies. Anne arrived,

leaning on the arm of the Duchess de Condé. At the same moment the Duchess de Montbazon appeared on the scene. She bowed carelessly to the Queen, ignored the Duchess de Condé and strolled on into the gardens.

Anne turned white with anger and accused Marie of bringing her there to insult her. It was useless to protest that Madame de Montbazon had not been invited. The Queen raged on and demanded that "that woman" withdraw at once from her presence. Marie begged her step-mother to leave but the cause of all the trouble stood her ground. She said that she had every right to enter a public place and refused to be chased away to please that venomous old Condé woman. Anne took the dignified course of retiring herself, accompanied by Madame de Condé.

All Marie's well-meant efforts to patch up a peace had failed disastrously and the fat was in the fire. The following day, August 12, Madame de Montbazon was ordered to retire to her estates at Rochfort and to remain there at the royal pleasure. At once Beaufort took up the cudgels in her defence and "The Importants" rallied around. With startling lack of logic they blamed Mazarin for the whole affair and declared that he had sold himself, body and soul, to the House of Condé.

Until now "The Importants" had been playing with the idea of conspiracy. The banishment of Madame de Montbazon gave them a grievance and brought matters to a head. With reckless fervor they plunged into schemes for the assassination of Mazarin. The day chosen was September 2, and His Eminence

was to be stabbed on his way to the Palace. Horses were to be in readiness to carry the assassins to the border and all arrangements were made.

Anne knew that trouble was brewing. She had shared in enough conspiracies herself to recognize the symptoms. On the day of the attempt she warned the Cardinal to remain within doors and take no risks. Her warning was unnecessary. Mazarin had not been trained by Richelieu for nothing. He knew all the conspirators' plans and acted with unusual decision. While the assassins were actually waiting for their victim to appear they were surrounded by the royal guards and arrested. Beaufort was warned but said arrogantly: "They will never dare to arrest ME," and swaggered into the Palace. He was actually talking confidentially to the Queen when Comminges arrested him, by her orders.

Before Beaufort realized what had happened, he found himself a prisoner in the fortress of Vincennes. There he remained until his daring escape five years later. So ended the conspiracy of "The Importants," "invented," as de Retz says contemptuously, "by four or five melancholy wights who looked as if their brains were of the shallowest. A cabal got up by people who all died mad."

Marie has been accused by many writers of being the moving spirit of "The Importants." Even Campion wrote: "I believe that the Duke's (Beaufort) disgust was prompted not by his own private feelings but by the persuasions of Madame de Chevreuse and Madame de Montbazon who had entire power over him and bore great hatred for the Cardinal."

The obvious answer to this is the fact that Marie remained at the Queen's side for two more years, which would have been impossible if she had been involved in the plot. An even more convincing answer is found in the plot itself. She was too wary and intelligent an intriguante to have any part in such a blundering, poorly-organized affair. Nevertheless, she suffered indirectly as a result of the fiasco. The breach between the factions was widened and Mazarin came boldly out on the Condé side. Because of their relationship to Beaufort, Vendôme and Mercoeur were banished from Court. Chateauneuf was made a scape-goat and dismissed from office though there was no evidence that he had been a member of the cabal. Worst of all, the threat against Mazarin's life did what all his skilful courtship had failed to do. It threw Anne into his waiting arms.

In November a studiously non-committal notice appeared in the Gazette: "The Queen in full Council made it plain that, considering the indisposition of Cardinal Mazarin, and considering that he is forced to cross the whole length of the great garden of the Palais Royal, and considering that some new business is constantly presenting itself to him and demanding to be communicated to the Queen, the Queen deems it appropriate to give the Cardinal an apartment in the Palais Royal, so that she may confer with him more conveniently concerning her business."

So far, so good. The Gazette did not explain the nature of the business which required a private passage to be built connecting the Cardinal's apartments with those of the Queen. Nor did it comment on the exceeding devotion of the said Cardinal to the said business, a devotion so great that he must needs confer with the Queen in the small hours of the morning. Court and populace were less tactful. They commented loudly and incessantly, to the great detriment of Anne's reputation.

Until now the Queen had been regarded by her subjects as a model of matronly discretion and virtue, while Mazarin had been tolerated. The thinly-veiled announcement of their intimate relations brought about a sharp reaction. Anne's popularity waned and Mazarin was looked upon as a monster who had martyred the beloved Beaufort, and a tyrant whose taxes oppressed the poor. Driving through the streets of Paris, Anne found her coach surrounded by a savage mob of market-women. They screamed obscene insults and one old hag came close to the coach door. "Queen," she snarled, ignoring all courtesy titles, "you have a man in your house who is taking everything."

Scared and indignant, Anne returned to the palace to be greeted with another moral lecture. La Porte, emboldened by years of devoted service, warned her of the dangers of her course. "All the world is talking about you and His Eminence in a way that ought to make you reflect on your position," he said bluntly.

"Who says that?" demanded Anne. "Everybody. It is so common that no one talks of anything else." He adds, "She reddened and became angry."

Anne resented criticism and ignored warnings. Helplessly infatuated by her Italian lover, she went recklessly on her way and in the process alienated all her old friends. Marie de Hautefort could never curb her sharp tongue and was constantly in trouble for criticizing the Cardinal. She combined this critical humor with an annoying loyalty to comrades of former days. One evening she was helping the Queen to undress and seized the opportunity to intercede for one of Anne's old servants who was in distress. Anne shrugged the matter aside impatiently and Marie de Hautefort lost her temper. Kneeling there with one stocking in her hand she said sharply that Anne "ought not to forget old friends." The Queen flared up at this blunt criticism. There was a brisk interchange of compliments and Marie de Hautefort was ordered from the room. The next day she was dismissed from Court forever.

With all their faults, Marie de Chevreuse and her group of comrades can never be accused of disloyalty to their friends. The news of the callous dismissal of the maid-of-honor brought them out on the warpath, rallying to the rescue. Marie de Hautefort had sacrificed her career, repulsed the friendship of Louis and won the enmity of Richelieu by her whole-hearted fealty to Anne. Now she was to be turned out ignominiously for a hasty word. De Jars pleaded for her to the Queen and then tackled Mazarin again. Marie de Chevreuse had little

hope of accomplishing anything but she went dauntlessly to the attack.

She had never referred to her own past services but she was eloquent in reminding Anne of Marie de Hautefort's devotion and courage in her cause. The more Marie pleaded, the more obstinate Anne became. She had no desire to be reminded of those terrible days when she had quaked before Richelieu and lived in terror. The very sight of Marie de Hautefort made her think of the Bastille and the Val de Grace. The argument became heated and Marie's comments were more truthful than politic. Anne in return delivered a crushing rebuke and, in effect, ordered Marie to mind her own business.

Madame de Motteville was present at the quarrel and describes it with unction. She was personally only too glad to see this coterie of old friends being cleared out of the palace. It left her in the enviable position of being the Queen's closest friend. "Madame de Chevreuse," she writes, "disgusted at seeing her friends exiled and her own influence lessening day by day, complained to the Queen of the little consideration she showed to her servants. The Queen requested her not to interfere but to leave her to govern the State and to choose what ministers she pleased and to manage her affairs in her own way. She advised Madame de Chevreuse to live pleasantly in France, not to mix herself in any intrigues but to enjoy a peace she had never had under the late King. She represented to her that it was

time to find pleasure in retreat and to regulate her life in thoughts of the other world."

Marie's fury at this pompous speech may be imagined. Just why, and on whose account, had she never had any peace? For whose sake had she spent weary years wandering about Europe, impoverished, homeless, in peril of losing her liberty and life itself? It was because of her loyalty to the portly woman who had the effrontery to read her a sermon before retiring to the arms of her Italian lover. As Madame de Motteville sagely remarks: "Nothing makes minds so rebellious as preachments against the grain."

This stormy scene killed the love for Anne of Austria that had been the great motivating force in Marie's life. It left a wound but did not by any means quell her fighting spirit. There were other friends left to help and an enemy to fight worthy of her steel. Putting aside vain regrets, Marie plunged with renewed zest into the struggle against Mazarin. "After the lion, the snake," she said contemptuously and set out to crush the supple creature who had wormed his way into the Queen's heart.

Mazarin was well aware of her hostility and his diary during these months is full of references to the struggle. "Madame de Chevreuse still hopes to cause my dismissal . . . she says that, if they do not resolve to rid themselves of me, affairs will never be any better, and the nobles will be as much enthralled as formerly; that my power will increase and that it is necessary to

bring matters to a crisis before Enghien returns with the army."

Mazarin was now definitely committed to the Condé faction and felt that the favor he had shown the family would insure the support of the victorious general. Backed by a popular commander and the royal army, his position would be impregnable. Marie too saw the strength of his position and took steps to neutralize it. Enghien at the head of his army was a force to be reckoned with. Enghien as a private individual was merely a bad-tempered young cub with more energy than sense. He could not be taken from his army but his army could be taken from him. In other words, with the cessation of hostilities, the army would melt away. Marie began to work for peace.

In this she found herself seeing eye-to-eye with the Queen. As a Spaniard, Anne was getting little satisfaction out of this war against her own country. War only drained the revenues of the country and impoverished the people. Further, Anne was an ardent Catholic and disliked fighting against Spain with the help of Protestant Sweden. Marie's offer to approach the Archduke Leopold, Spanish Viceroy in the Netherlands, was received with favor. So was her suggestion that a marriage be arranged between Leopold and La Grande Mademoiselle the daughter of Gaston.

Negotiations were well under way and peace was in sight when Mazarin intervened. He, too, wanted peace but he did not want it on Marie's terms or at her suggestion. He persuaded Gaston to refuse the

proposed match and made endless diplomatic difficulties. At the same time he used his influence with the Queen to turn her against Madame de Chevreuse. The covered passage gave him an immense advantage over his rival and in those intimate "conferences" with Anne he bent her to his will. Marie, too played his game. She was not a patient person at the best of times and allowed her scorn of the Cardinal to show too plainly. The subtle campaign degenerated into open warfare and in that she was hopelessly at a disadvantage. Anne, intoxicated with the sweetness of those stolen hours, took the side of her lover. Marie lost her temper and told Her Majesty a few home truths.

Finally, after a more than usually violent quarrel, Anne signed an order banishing the Duchess to her Chateau of Dampierre. She was given 200,000 livres, (probably the balance of Anne's debt to her) dismissed from Court and told, kindly but firmly, to keep quiet. It was a crushing blow to Marie. Heart-broken but defiant, she retired from the Court, taking her favorite daughter, Charlotte Marie, with her.

Her other daughters were both in convents. In that day, ladies of quality sought appointment as abbesses just as gentlemen clamored for political appointments. The revenues of a great abbey were a substantial gift and the Lady Abbess a person of importance. Anne Marie de Lorraine, Marie's eldest daughter, was Abbess of Port au Dames, the younger, Henriette, Abbess of Jouarre. Her son, Louis Charles d'Albert, Count de Luynes, was an officer on Condé's staff.

So far, then, Marie's return to Court had accomplished much. Her family were well-provided for with the exception of Charlotte Marie. This youngest daughter chose to accompany her mother into exile and followed her checkered career to the end. Through the stormy days to come, through all the ups and downs of capricious fortune, they remained together, friends and loyal companions.

Marie had been warned by Anne to abstain from political activities, but while she lived she must needs be intriguing. She had a new grievance against the established order of things and a new cause to champion. The year before, Henriette Marie had arrived from England with her tiny baby. She was a fugitive and had only escaped from the all-conquering Cromwell after incredible adventures. She had been pursued by a Parliamentary vessel in the Channel and eluded it only to be wrecked by a storm on the coasts of Brittany. Now she was safe in France but her husband and the rest of her family were prisoners in the hands of Cromwell.

Marie had flown to the side of her friend and begged Mazarin to send troops to the aid of the English royalists. The Cardinal demurred. Richelieu had financed the Puritans during his reign. His successor did not go so far as that but he saw no reason for intervention. In vain Marie lobbied and interceded, argued and stormed. Neither Anne nor the minister would act. They offered Henriette asylum in France and a welcome at Court. Beyond that they would not go.

With her exile to Dampierre, Marie began active measures on behalf of the unfortunate Queen of England. Before, she had worked for Anne against Richelieu. Now she worked for Henriette against Mazarin, and with the same weapons. Spain again was called on to help and Marie was using her influence with the Court of Madrid on behalf of the royalist cause. At the same time she turned to another old ally, Charles of Lorraine. He was no longer a Duke but had made a name for himself as a military leader. With his army of mercenaries, he drifted about Europe, offering his services to the highest bidder. Marie begged him to take his troops to England and try conclusions with Cromwell's Ironsides.

Charles was quite willing and professed himself Marie's adoring servant to command. His army was less agreeable. They were ready to fight anyone, anywhere, any time, but only for cold cash. Who would pay them in England? Certainly not King Charles. Henriette Marie had already sold her jewels to pay the dwindling royalist army and every cavalier was melting down his silver and beggaring himself for the King's cause.

Marie conceived the brilliant idea of inducing Spain to pay the Lorrainer's troops. Phillip could not see any profit for Spain in such a transaction and played for time. Meanwhile there was much correspondence, much coming and going, much subterranean activity. Marie was back at her old game and playing it with great gusto. Officially, she was forbidden to communicate with her friends at Court but she received many

clandestine visitors. Campion and Montresor came often to see her, carefully disguised. She was in touch with Vendôme, Bouillon and Lord Goring, British Ambassador in Paris. Young Craft, still head over heels in love, was her messenger in place of Montagu, and she used the English Embassy as her post office.

Mazarin spied on her much as Richelieu had done and knew of her doings. He scented danger in all this activity and warned Anne. When Henriette Marie wanted to visit her friend at Dampierre, permission was brusquely refused. Anne ordered that no one was to hold communication with Madame de Chevreuse on any pretext whatsoever. Traps were set to catch visitors and into one of them tumbled a harmless rabbit of a physician, summoned from Paris to attend the Duchess.

Marie was really ill at this time and the visit of the physician was a bona fide professional one. Nevertheless he was arrested and questioned as to his presence at Dampierre. The good man knew nothing of his patient's treasonable activities but he had seen certain things during his visit which supplied Mazarin with useful information.

Infuriated by the arrest of her physician, Marie wrote to Anne scolding her for the "outrage" in a most high-handed manner. The Queen retaliated by sending a troop of guards to arrest the Duchess and take her to the fortress of Angoulême, where Chateauneuf had languished for ten years. Marie's first intimation of this was the appearance at the Chateau of the guards, commanded by a young officer named Ricquette. It was

a staggering blow, but her quick wits rose to the occasion.

Smiling sweetly at the officer, Marie begged him to accept a little refreshment while she collected a few necessaries for the journey. Flattered by the graciousness of such a noble lady, Ricquette sat down to wait for her. An hour later he was still waiting but he reflected with a superior masculine smile that ladies always take an interminable time dressing. By the time he became suspicious, Marie de Chevreuse was far away, and with her was her daughter, Charlotte. Escaping by a back door with nothing but their jewels and a small bundle of clothing, they plunged into the thick woods that surrounded the Chateau. Ricquette sent his men along all the roads but could never find a trace of the fugitives.

Following unfrequented lanes, travelling by night and buying food from isolated cottages, Marie and Charlotte came at length to St. Malo, a sea-port on the Coast of Brittany. There they found the captain of a small coasting vessel who agreed to take them to England. Before leaving, Marie got in touch with a gentleman of St. Malo called Coetquin and entrusted her jewels to him with the request that they be sent to the Count de Montresor. With them was a letter to the Count.

Coetquin was a good Breton, glad to do anything to oblige a Rohan, but he had no desire to put his own neck in a noose. He duly sent jewels and letter to Montresor. The next day he wrote to Mazarin telling him what he had done. Mazarin promptly decided to seize the jewels and arrest Montresor. The officer sent to

effect the arrest found the Count reading a letter from the Duchess. He tried to seize it but Montresor was too quick for him. In the struggle it was torn in half. The infatuated man threw one half on the fire and swallowed the other.

The jewels were hidden in a safe place and Montresor steadily refused to reveal their whereabouts. As a punishment for his obstinacy, he was allowed to rot in prison for a year and treated with the utmost severity. Referring to his fate, a French historian writes: "This passion was fatal to Montresor. Nothing did him more harm than his love for the Duchess, which he could not conquer. What a strange effect has this furious passion when once it makes itself master of a heart too tender and too voluptuous!"

While Montresor lay in the dungeons of the Bastille, his friends were active in his behalf. Members of the House of Guise, in particular, interceded for him, pointing out that he was guilty of no crime and that his imprisonment showed mere malice on the Cardinal's part. At last Mazarin yielded to the pressure and released the prisoner. In an attempt to make amends he invited him to dinner, apologized for the whole affair, which he blamed on others, and tried to conciliate the Count. It was wasted effort. Montresor could not forgive the injustice of his arrest, the brutality with which he had been treated or the exile of Marie de Chevreuse. He remained one of Mazarin's bitterest enemies.

Marie, meanwhile, had sailed for England with the idea of helping King Charles in his tribulations.

Any lost cause was sure of her sympathies and the royalist cause was most assuredly lost, beyond all hope of redemption. Indomitably she set out, but the fatigues and dangers of the flight from Dampierre had exhausted her strength and she took ship more dead than alive. The choppy waters of the Channel in the February gales did not improve her condition and for a time Charlotte had visions of burying her mother at sea. To cap the climax, the lugger was chased and overhauled by a Parliamentary frigate. Cromwell had no intention of allowing the firebrand to land in England, and had sent to intercept her.

The lugger was taken into Guernsey, one of the Channel Islands and there Madame la Duchesse and Charlotte were put ashore. Cromwell wished to send her back to France. Mazarin politely but firmly refused to have her. While the diplomats argued, Marie remained midway between the two countries, like Mahomet's coffin suspended between earth and heaven. Annoying as was the situation, it gave her time to recover from her illness and regain some of her old verve.

She celebrated her return to health by captivating Lord Pembroke, the Governor of the Island. He took up her cause with fervor and tried to procure for her a passport to England. When it was brusquely refused, Marie cast about for a refuge more to her liking than this desolate island in mid-channel.

All through the spring of 1645 Marie remained in Guernsey, suffering from ill-health, cold and appalling boredom. Not until July did release come.

Then, through Pembroke and friends in London, the Spanish Ambassador was induced to issue a passport to Liege in the Spanish Netherlands. Once again Marie was an exile, and it was five years before she returned to her beloved France.

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN Mazarin heard that Marie de Chevreuse had fled from France, he solemnly recorded the fact in his diary and added complacently; "How merrily has she gone to her ruin, who might have been one of the most fortunate women in the world." He rejoiced in the belief that the departure of his most dangerous opponent would put an end to his troubles. As it happened, his self-congratulation was a little premature and the worst was yet to come.

Within a generation, French history repeated itself. The murder of Henry of Navarre had left the country at the mercy of the strong-willed Marie de Medici who ruled for her infant son with the help of the Italian adventurer, Concini. The favors she showered on this creature alienated the nobles and caused a civil war that lasted for seven years. The leader of the rebellious lords was the Duke de Condé.

The death of Louis XIII left a parallel situation. Once again a self-willed foreign Queen ruled with the help of an Italian adventurer. Once again the nobles, jealous of the growing power of the favorite, embroiled the country in civil war. For four years France was destined to be torn with internecine strife and once again the storm centre would be a Duke de Condé.

The scandal of the letters, the dismissal of Madame de Montbazon and the fiasco of "The Importants" had weakened the Vendôme faction. The exile of Marie de Chevreuse was a further blow and left the House of Condé in the ascendant. It was vital that d'Enghien, who had succeeeded his father as Duke de Condé, should be kept loyal to the Minister. As First Prince of the Blood and commander-in-chief of the army, he wielded a very big stick. It was equally vital that his power should be kept within reasonable limits. With one hand Mazarin fed Condé, with the other he stroked Vendôme or patted Gaston, now Lord-Lieutenant of the Kingdom.

So much for the Court. In the country districts poverty and famine stalked hand in hand, taking ruthless toll. Continual wars, excessive taxation and the break-down of trade had reduced the lower classes to utter destitution. The tax-gatherers took tools from the artisans, ploughs and live stock from the farmers, leaving them with no means of making a living. Whole families crawled into dung-hills to keep warm or lay meekly down to die with their bones piercing the emaciated flesh. Great stretches of country, laid waste by the passage of the armies, were given up to weeds and one could ride for leagues without seeing a smoking chimney or a cultivated field.

Under the iron hand of Richelieu the country had lain mute, crushed into submission. Now heads were raised and from the devastated land rose a murmur of despair that quickly became a howl of rage.

There is a desperate courage that comes from having nothing left to lose. When a man sees his children dying of starvation before his eyes, he is not interested in foreign politics or Court intrigues. The country was sick; its wounds were gangrenous and the people demanded relief. They laid the blame not on Richelieu, whose policy was responsible for this ghastly state of affairs, but on the Italian who was soon to bring the war to a triumphant close. In every remote village, in every crowded town throughout the land, his name was reviled. Men cursed him, with his pomaded hair and soft greedy hands. He was hated with a bitterness that few men have inspired and included in the public condemnation was "Madame Anne."

So long as the burden was borne by the country districts, Parliament remained philosophical. Farm relief was as unsatisfactory then as now. The solid middle class in the cities, however, knew how to make themselves heard and it was a new tax imposed on property in Paris that roused the deputies to action. Anne found herself faced by a stubborn body of legislators, insistent that the new tax be withdrawn. She startled the deputies by a shrill scream of rage, told them brusquely to shut their mouths, and stamped out of the chamber. A deputation which came to the palace to voice a protest was dismissed with scant ceremony, and Anne vowed to make an example of Broussel, the leader of the opposition.

Then came Paul de Gondi, better known to history as the Cardinal de Retz, who thus makes his first appearance on the stage. He was Bishop-Coadjutor of

Paris and came as the people's representative to urge the Queen to make some concessions. She would have done well to listen to his advice. Instead, she found him merely funny and after his departure amused her intimates by imitating his walk and manner.

There was, it must be admitted, something grotesque about the Coadjutor. He had a swarthy face with prominent, short-sighted eyes, a snub nose and a wide sensual mouth. His broad heavy torso was awkwardly set on a pair of bandy legs and he walked with "a prancing, tip-toeing swagger" that suggested "an unfortunate ballet-master whose troubles had dethroned his reason."

His appearance may have been peculiar, but he was not the man to be dismissed so lightly. The goggle eyes could see farther through a brick wall than most. The snub nose denoted pugnacity, courage and a resourcefulness that made him a formidable foe. His reason was far from being "dethroned" and behind the sensual lips was the golden tongue of a born orator. With it, he could sweep his hearers off their feet, rouse them to blind fury or calm them to patient restraint. The restless Paris mob was his chosen instrument and on it he played whatever tune pleased him. Unfortunately, the tune he chose was always the one best suited to his own interests. He was quite frankly out for himself and those bandy legs were to carry him far up the ladder of success before he toppled down and landed in a prison.

Later, Anne was to realize the mistake she made in antagonizing de Retz. For the moment, her

love for Mazarin blinded her; her determination to have her own way made her deaf to reason. While matters were still at a deadlock, news came from the battlefront.

Marie de Chevreuse, from her exile at Liege, had been carrying on her campaign against Mazarin and had joined hands with the Archduke Leopold, who commanded the Spanish forces. He had a great admiration for her intelligence and profited by her accurate knowledge of the position of affairs in France. Anne became embroiled with the deputies late in July, 1648. In that same month Marie told Leopold that the time had come for a decisive attack. The Court was in a turmoil, the country in dire straits and the Queen at logger-heads with the Parliament. Condé's forces were depleted by disease and desertions and he was on the defensive. So serious was the military outlook that Mazarin wrote to Condé; "I conjure you, Monsieur, to bear in mind that on this occasion we have more need of your prudence than of your courage."

Marie's advice was sound. Forced marches and a surprise attack would have found Condé's forces isolated and unable to offer much resistance. Instead of striking swiftly, Leopold dawdled and procrastinated. When it was almost too late, he set out with a great fanfare of trumpets and enough camp equipment to hamper a Napoleon. The French had ample warning of his intentions and were able to combine their two main armies. Condé and Turenne drew together at Lens, caught the leisurely Spaniard in a trap and administered a crushing defeat.

When the good tidings of the battle reached Paris, Anne thought that the moment had come for a decisive stroke. Backed by a victorious army, she felt able to deal firmly with her pugnacious subjects. While the bells of Notre Dame were still ringing out their glad carillon and the citizens were making merry, Broussel and two of his colleagues were put under arrest. The officer who performed this duty was the same Comminges who was said to have solved Anne's matrimonial difficulties in 1637, and who had been her devoted servant ever since.

If the Queen imagined that the arrest of the deputies would pass unnoticed in the general jubilation, she was mistaken. No sooner had the news circulated than the bells of Notre Dame were drowned in the howl of an angry mob. The streets, lately filled with hilarious crowds, were barricaded and the whole city was in an uproar. When the mobs were ordered to disperse, they retorted by coming *en masse* to the palace and yelling beneath the windows. A delegation forced its way into the Queen's presence and demanded the dismissal of Mazarin and the immediate release of Broussel.

Anne had the courage of obstinacy and refused to accede to the demands of her people. With the deadly patience of beasts of prey the mob waited outside in the broiling August sun for the return of the delegation. Then the noise redoubled. Stones were thrown and the air was filled with howls of execration.

For days the seige of the Palais Royal continued but Anne remained obdurate. De Retz was very

much to the fore, playing a complicated game of his own. In the streets, he went about on foot like a good democrat, inciting the people to fight for their cause. In the palace, he professed himself the loyal supporter of the Court but advised the Queen to make some concessions and offered his services as mediator. He was suave, courteous and diplomatic, making every effort to ingratiate himself with Anne and Mazarin.

Once again Anne rejected de Retz and depended solely on Mazarin. In the crisis, he proved a broken reed. With all his subtlety and political ability, he was an arrant physical coward and shrank from violence. When he heard the savage yells of the mob his knees shook and his cheeks turned pale beneath the rouge. His only thought was of flight to save his own skin. Repeatedly he urged Anne to escape with the little King and put herself beyond the reach of the infuriated people. She had only to look across the Channel to see what the man in the street could do when roused. Was not King Charles of England being tried for his life by his own Parliament? Was not his Queen even then a fugitive in the Palace, living on French charity?

All through the autumn, Anne held out against her lover's frantic pleadings. Then she suddenly decided to follow his advice. In the dead of night, without warning, the Court fled secretly to St. Germains. Helter-skelter, without baggage or spare clothing, they bundled into carriages and drove off through the darkness. Being a mere summer pavilion, St. Germains had been dismantled and no preparations had been made for

the invasion. In the cold winter dawn these pampered lords and ladies found themselves without fires, bedding or any of the comforts of life. The little King and his brother shared a mattress on the floor. Many had not even a blanket between them and the bare boards.

From her uncomfortable refuge at St. Germains, Anne ordered the deputies to leave Paris and go home. They retorted with a demand that Mazarin be dismissed from office. Once again it was a deadlock. Anne gritted her teeth and determined to starve her rebellious people into submission. Most of the food supply of the city was brought in from the suburbs and it was a comparatively easy matter to cut off supplies by guarding the roads. Before long, the citizens felt the pinch of hunger but de Retz kept their anger at boiling point. They might die but they would never surrender. He raised an army of twelve thousand men called the Corinthians, and prepared to keep the roads open.

Matters were at this stage when Condé returned victorious from the wars and took a hand. De Retz had been angling for his support but the favor shown by Mazarin to the General and his family now bore fruit. Condé rejected all the overtures of the popular party. "My name is Louis de Bourbon," he said magniloquently, "and I can do nothing to shake the throne." He went to St. Germains, assured Anne of his unshakable loyalty, and took command of the situation. With his troops he drew a cordon tight about Paris and systematically laid waste the market gardens that surrounded the walls. The citizens watched the work of destruction and

felt their admiration for the hero of Rocroi and Lens oozing away.

Mazarin rubbed his hands with glee at the acquisition of Condé and thought that it was all over but the shouting. Then matters took a curious turn. When the people cried "Down with Mazarin," they woke a responsive chord in many an aristocratic heart. Nobles who had been disappointed in their hopes of preferment thought the canaille showed excellent judgment in yelling for the Minister's blood. The appearance of Condé further complicated matters. The young Duke was supreme at St. Germains and in his ineffable conceit trod heavily on the sensitive toes of less favored gentry. The old rivalry between the two factions was still active and enemies of the House of Condé turned naturally to the side of the Fronde, as the Parisian party was called.

One noble after another, loathing Mazarin and jealous of Condé's prestige, slipped away from St. Germains to join the Frondeurs in Paris. The Duke de Beaufort, after a dramatic escape from Vincennes, had taken refuge in the Netherlands. Now he appeared in Paris and was greeted with enthusiasm. Parliament formally acquitted him of the charge of conspiring to assassinate Mazarin five years before and the city took him to its heart. His blond beauty, democratic manners and startling flow of obscene language endeared him to the rougher element and he was dubbed "Le roi des Halles," king of the markets.

Rochefoucauld was early known as a Frondeur. His romantic devotion to Anne in earlier days had brought him into disfavor with Richelieu. He had been imprisoned in the Bastille for a week on suspicion of helping Marie de Chevreuse to escape to Spain and had forfeited a Marshal's baton by his loyalty to the Queen. Naturally, he had expected to be rewarded for his services during the Regency but had found himself ignored, on the advice of Mazarin. He was among the first to join the Fronde, and was one of the Cardinal's bitterest enemies.

Then came the Duke d'Elboeuf, a member of the House of Guise. His arrival so delighted the Frondeurs that they made him commander-in-chief of the army of Paris. The next recruit was the Duke de Bouillon who could never resist an opportunity to embroil himself in any rising. He and d'Elboeuf were just beginning to enjoy themselves as Frondeurs when they were eclipsed by even more exalted recruits.

The Duchess de Longueville, so long famous for her chastity, had at last succumbed to the polished charms of Rochefoucauld, and her fall from her aloof pedestal was to have far-reaching results. The flame lit in her snowy bosom by the elegant flaneur became a raging conflagration that destroyed family ties, loyalty to her house, everything that she had held dear in the past. Influenced by her lover, the Duchess abandoned Condé and joined the Fronde. With her she brought her husband and the Prince de Conti, her younger brother,

who was accused of loving his brilliant sister with a fervor more gallant than fraternal.

When Conti appeared at the gates, the Frondeurs were overcome with incredulous delight. They showered him with compliments and made him commander-in-chief, deposing d'Elboeuf. Condé roared with laughter when he heard that his frail weakling of a brother had been given command of an army, but Paris was all enthusiasm. The two Duchesses, de Longueville and de Bouillon, were given almost royal honors, and sat in state in the public square to watch the storming of the Bastille. Cannon roared, violins sounded, scarves waved and the crowd shouted ecstatically. After about six shots had been fired, the gates of the Bastille were thrown open and the keys surrendered to the sovereign people of Paris.

Madame de Montbazon returned from the country and plunged into the thick of it all. Then La Grande Mademoiselle, not to be done out of any excitement, delighted the adoring mob by establishing herself at the Tuileries where she could watch the fun from her windows.

Food was at starvation prices, the crowd was out of hand and the whole city in a turmoil but the noble recruits looked on the whole affair as a gorgeous jest and played politics with immense vim. The women especially enjoyed every minute of it, "a bevy of voluptuous dames rapturously engaged in making mischief." As Voltaire says, "The French flung themselves into

sedition through caprice, and with laughter. Women were at the head of all the factions; love made, and unmade, cabals."

During this first phase of the Fronde the woman who played the most prominent part was the Duchess de Longueville. She had already brought over two valuable recruits and had hopes of seducing Turenne from the royal cause. The great general was already more than susceptible to her charms and she felt that his capitulation was only a matter of time. Meanwhile she won the adoration of the populace by choosing the Hôtel de Ville itself as the scene of her accouchement and called her son Charles Paris. Her husband, more practical, used his vast influence in Normandy on behalf of the Fronde. Other provinces followed suit and soon local parliaments all over France were demanding the dismissal of Mazarin.

Political and personal issues were hopelessly entangled. Families were divided; factions formed and dissolved overnight; classes and masses mixed in democratic familiarity. To the Burghers of Paris, the Fronde was a fine political fracas; to the nobles and their ladies, a delightful opera bouffe with most entrancing opportunities for love and intrigue; to the poor, it was stark tragedy. For four years France was a seething cauldron of intrigue, treachery and civil strife; a devilish witches' brew whose fumes poisoned the land and prepared the way for the Revolution and the Terror.

Through all the excitement during the winter of 1648, Marie remained at Liege. Her dealings

with Leopold before Lens had not escaped the knowledge of Mazarin who had spoken reproachfully to the Duke de Chevreuse about her behavior. Obediently, Chevreuse wrote urging her to refrain from treasonous activities. Her answer gave him little satisfaction. "I desire nothing so much," she wrote, "as to be with you in peace, and see the affairs of our House in good condition, but I fear my usual evil fortune will prevent my enjoying this great good."

A charming sentiment, of course, but not to be taken seriously. Marie's most "evil fortune" at the moment was being deprived of any share in such a gorgeous turmoil. Like the war horse of Biblical fame, she smelt the battle afar off and champed with impatience. Helpless, inactive at Liege, she positively sizzled with impotent fury while her son, Count de Luynes, fought with the Corinthians and her elderly husband shouldered a pike at the barricades.

Her exile was almost over. Though out of sight, Marie de Chevreuse was too forceful a personality to be out of mind. De Retz saw in her a great potential asset to the Fronde and early in the game made overtures. They were prompted by a shrewd knowledge of human nature. Where Mazarin had offered a bare-faced bribe, de Retz won her sympathies by a subtle compliment. Condé's army was giving the royalist side an immense advantage. De Retz begged Marie to use her influence with Leopold to secure Spanish troops for the Fronde.

A request of this nature was almost certain to enlist Marie's support. To make assurance doubly

sure, de Retz selected as his envoy the man who seemed most likely to appeal to the Duchess on the emotional side.

In January 1649 there appeared at Liege the Sieur Geoffrey de Laigue, Baron de Plessis-Patay and Lord of Bondouffle. He was the antithesis of the elegant Holland but Marie's tastes had changed with the passing years. De Laigue was a robust creature, vital and challenging. Full red lips, a roving eye and a flow of language more forceful than polite stamped him as a soldier. He had, in fact, been one of the officers on Condé's staff but a quarrel with the arrogant young generalissimo had thrown him into the arms of the Fronde. Without being conspicuous for subtlety, de Laigue had a certain forthright charm and was undoubtedly a man of parts. De Retz sent him to Liege with instructions to win the heart of the Duchess and enlist her under the banner of the Fronde.

Like Campion he came, saw and was conquered. The surrender was reciprocated but de Laigue never broke the spell cast over him by Marie's matchless charm. Until the day of his death thirty years later he remained her staunch friend and devoted lover.

Marie in her turn succumbed to the wooing of de Laigue but she required little persuasion to take a hand in the game. She at once opened negotiations with Leopold who was quite ready to make the confusion in France more confounded. Condé had inflicted two crushing defeats on the Archduke and this seemed

an excellent opportunity for revenge. Leopold promised to invade France with 25,000 men early in the Spring.

Meanwhile Condé had delivered a smashing blow at the Fronde. At Charenton on the outskirts of Paris, a pitched battle was fought on February 8 between the royalist army and the Corinthians. It was the old story of disciplined troops against enthusiastic amateurs. Individual leaders, among whom Chevreuse was prominent, performed prodigies of valor, but the result was a foregone conclusion. The army of Paris was routed and took refuge behind the barricades. Still the leaders of the Fronde refused to come to terms with the Court. De Retz had an ace up his sleeve in the form of the Spanish army and induced his colleagues to hold out a little longer.

Early in March Leopold was on the move and Turenne suddenly deserted the Court and joined the Fronde. Madame de Longueville had sapped his loyalty but it was Condé himself, with his *farouche* insolence, who drove Turenne over to the opposition. The acquisition of the great General, coinciding with the advance of the Spanish army, completed the triumph of the Fronde. Anne was forced to capitulate and notified Parliament that she would consider their demands.

The proceedings of the next few weeks throw an unlovely light on French aristocracy in the seventeenth century. At the first hint that negotiations were to begin, one noble after another slipped secretly away to St. Germains, each trying to make good terms

for himself. With victory in sight, they could afford to drive hard bargains and were insatiable in their demands. Each noble beggar in turn was received warmly by Mazarin who was ready to promise anything. He wanted peace at any price and could see about keeping his promises later.

Along with the herd went Chevreuse and his step-son, de Luynes. They too had favors to ask but not for themselves. De Luynes agreed to return to his allegiance on condition that the Queen "would bring back the Duchess de Chevreuse, my mother, with all necessary provision for her safety, so that she may go here and there and live in any part of the country as it may please her without being sought for on any account whatsoever, or on any pretext of any kind."

Chevreuse too had come to plead for his wife's pardon. All through her exile he had wearied Anne with his intercessions and now returned to the attack with renewed vigor. It was a painful interview. Anne told him firmly that "his wife had made countless cabals against her service and that she would not be contented or satisfied with her submission until she had seen a true repentance."

When Chevreuse offered to be responsible for his wife's conduct the Queen only laughed scornfully and made some sarcastic remark to the effect that he did not seem to have much control over Madame de Chevreuse.

At this unanswerable retort, Chevreuse shifted his ground and begged the royal clemency for

his daughter, Charlotte Marie. "She is really beautiful," he said eagerly, and embarked on a catalogue of her charms. Anne checked him brusquely and said with pious unction that Monsieur le Duc "had too much love for beauty and should now begin to love heaven and virtue."

Throughout the interview, Anne had been yelling at the top of her lungs which partly accounts for her acerbity. The old Duke, now well over seventy, was stone deaf and somewhat decrepit but there was life in the old dog yet. At Charenton he had distinguished himself by his reckless bravery and Anne screamed reproaches at him for fighting against her. The old aristocrat carried off the honors. He replied with dignity that Paris and he had always been lovers and that he had never fought against the Queen until she turned on his first love. It was a curious throw-back to the days when his father, the Duke de Guise, had been "King of Paris."

On April 1, at Reuil, peace was formally signed between Anne and the Fronde. A general amnesty was proclaimed and the Court returned to the Palais Royal.

On April 12, Marie de Chevreuse appeared in Paris, accompanied by her lovely daughter and Geoffrey de Laigue. No permission had been given her to return but she had calmly taken a chance. Anne flew into one of her sudden rages and peremptorily ordered Marie to leave for Dampierre within twenty-four hours. Marie appealed to de Retz. He in turn went to Mathew Molé, President of the Parliament, and pleaded on the lady's behalf. He had hardly mentioned her name when

Molé silenced him with a gracious wave of the hand. "Enough, my good Sir. You do not wish her to go? She shall not go. Besides," he added meditatively, "her eyes are far too fine."

The Queen was helpless before the victorious Parliament and sulked while Paris made a fuss over its latest favorite. By inducing Leopold to advance with his army Marie had forced Anne to come to terms and she was enormously popular as a result. Among the mass of pamphlets that flooded the town was one entitled:

THE FRENCH AMAZON
or
THE HELP OF THE PARISIANS
or
THE APPROACH OF THE TROOPS OF
MADAME DE CHEVREUSE
represented under the title of
THE ILLUSTRIOUS CONQUEROR
or
THE GENEROUS CONSTANCY OF
MADAME DE CHEVREUSE

The title-page suggests that the anonymous author had some difficulty in selecting a name, but there was no ambiguity in his treatment of his subject. For several pages he indulged in eulogistic praise of the heroism and brilliance of the Duchess and talked as though she had won a war single-handed.

Marie established herself once again at the Hôtel de Chevreuse with de Laigue as a member of the household. Old friends rallied round, and the great mansion became the unofficial headquarters of the Fronde. A most frequent visitor was the Coadjutor who came to profit by the sage counsel of the mother and to bask in the smiles of the daughter.

For all his grotesque appearance, de Retz fascinated women and had a physical magnetism that was almost hypnotic. His memoirs record his triumphs with a curious blend of cynicism and humor, and the list of his conquests includes some of the proudest names in France. Even the beautiful Anne de Rohan, Princess de Guéméné, was for a time his mistress. Lover, gambler and bon vivant, de Retz cut a wide swath in Paris society. His reputation was hardly fitting for a consecrated bishop but he cheerfully thumbed his nose at the critics. "My poor friend," he said to one pious soul, "you waste your time preaching to me. I know I am a rogue but I mean to go on being one. I prefer it that way and get most enjoyment out of it."

He now turned his attentions to young Mademoiselle de Chevreuse and wooed her ardently. Charlotte was extremely pretty with large blue eyes and masses of fair hair. She was gay and lively, somewhat spoiled and petulant perhaps, but had a vivacious charm. De Retz said in his memoirs that "she was beautiful but silly to a ridiculous extent." That did not prevent his pursuing her with his attentions. The Bishop was not

the man to mix business with pleasure and did not demand brains in the women he wooed.

Marie de Chevreuse had enough brains for two. While too much a woman of the world to allow her daughter to fall under the spell of de Retz, she profited by his infatuation. Later when a turn of the wheel brought her and Mazarin together, the Cardinal wrote in his diary: "She confided to me that she would keep de Retz in hand through her daughter, who behaved to the Coadjutor in such a way as to make him in love with her; and the said lady did in fact rule him in this way." Perhaps Charlotte was not so silly after all.

Within a few weeks after her return, Marie had established herself as one of the ruling spirits of the Fronde. From then on, the policy of the party was dictated by the inner circle which met at the Hôtel de Chevreuse.

There was need for diplomacy during the months that followed the Peace of Reuil. When the terms of the treaty were made public, there was one concerted howl of rage from the nobles. They had defied the Queen, forfeited their prestige, fraternized with the *canaille*, fought at the barricades, and what had they got out of it? Precisely nothing. The rascally Parliament had made peace without extorting any favors for their noble allies. It is true that a general amnesty had been proclaimed but there was no profit in that. The aristocratic Frondeurs upbraided the deputies in most abusive terms for such flagrant neglect of their interests, but recriminations, while a relief to the feelings, pay no dividends. Mazarin cheerfully repudiated all the promises made in those private conferences at St. Germains and nothing could be done about it.

Backed by Condé and his army, Mazarin was now in a strong position. Leopold had retreated and Turenne was won back to his allegiance by a heavy bribe. Conti and de Longueville, finding that Condé was in the ascendancy, returned to the family fold. They thought that there was more to be gained there than from the Fronde, and their foresight was rewarded.

Condé felt that his loyalty during the recent disturbance had entitled him to everything that was not nailed down, and he claimed it. Titles, government posts, pensions and gifts were distributed with a lavish hand among his friends while the other Frondeurs were left shivering out in the cold. Condé's demands at last became so outrageous that Mazarin was obliged to put his foot down. There would soon be nothing left to give.

The General promptly turned on Mazarin in high dudgeon and threatened to have him dismissed. In self-protection the Cardinal made tentative overtures to the opposition, headed by de Retz and Marie de Chevreuse. There was only one bribe that would buy Marie's co-operation and Mazarin paid it. In August he induced the Queen to receive Madame la Duchesse at Court.

On September 5 a great fête was given to celebrate the King's eleventh birthday. When the music struck up, Louis led out La Grande Mademoiselle, his first cousin. His younger brother, Phillippe of Anjou

danced with little Anne de Rohan, daughter of Madame de Montbazon; the partner of the Prince de Conti was Charlotte Marie de Lorraine, Mademoiselle de Chevreuse. The selection of partners for the first dance, formally arranged by Court officials, according to rules of precedence, proves that Marie de Chevreuse and la Montbazon were firmly re-established at Court. Anne's hand had been forced but she did not pretend to like it. She held the fête in the daytime out of pure feminine malice. "Certain Frondeuses," she said cattishly, "wear too much rouge to enjoy appearing except by artificial light."

Meanwhile Condé plunged recklessly on his way. Success had gone to his head and he imagined himself Dictator of France.

"I am Sir Oracle
And when I ope my lips, let no dog bark"

Nothing might be done at Court without his permission and he was developing an exaggerated case of megalomania. A boy in his early twenties is easily unbalanced by fame, but nothing can excuse Condé's arrogant folly at this time.

The proposed match between the Duke de Mercoeur and one of Mazarin's nieces is a case in point. All arrangements had been made when Condé stepped in. He professed himself aghast at the idea of a Peer of France marrying a low-born Italian girl and insisted on the negotiations being broken off. Mercoeur, Vendôme's son, naturally resented the interference of Condé but Mazarin was forced to yield. Condé blackmailed him by threatening to join the Fronde. To prevent this, the Cardinal actually signed a promise not to marry any of his nieces without the Duke's consent. He further agreed not to grant any appointments without first consulting him and to "remember his friends and servants" when any lucrative posts were vacant.

Apparently Mazarin was helpless beneath the heel of Condé but he was never so dangerous as when he was most humble. With all his circuitous guile he set himself to weaken the young dictator and, as a first step, isolated him from all his fellow nobles. It was in October that the famous "War of the Taborets" threw society into a fresh turmoil, and in it Mazarin found his opportunity.

A taboret is a low stool, but the term had a special significance in French Court circles. It meant the privilege of being seated in the royal presence and corresponded to the right of a Spanish grandee to keep his hat on before the King. In an informal audience those who had the grant of Taboret sat on stools scattered about the room. Others, less favored, stood wearily on their noble legs. Petty as all this may seem, it was of vast importance in a Court where matters of precedence were of all-absorbing interest.

Rochefoucauld wanted the Taboret for his wife and asked his mistress, Madame de Longueville, to use her influence in the matter. She went to her all-powerful brother and persuaded him to obtain this favor from the Queen. Anne was dubious about granting yet another privilege to a member of the Condé clan, but

Mazarin himself urged her to consent. He foresaw with accuracy what would happen.

No sooner had the Queen announced that Madame de Rochefoucauld had been granted the Taboret than a storm of protest shook the Court. Gilded coaches rattled furiously through the streets of Paris, going from one Hôtel to another. In a hundred salons excited groups discussed this latest victory for the insufferable Condé. Solemn meetings were held, formal protests drawn up and submitted to the Queen. Each noble family felt affronted by the grant and a common grievance drew them together. The Condé clan, complacent in victory, presented an impervious front to all attacks and soon found itself isolated. Delighted with the success of his ruse, Mazarin rubbed his hands with glee, but Anne was frightened by the storm she had raised. She hastily withdrew the Taboret from Madame de Rochefoucauld, thus winning the nobles over to her side and alienating Condé.

In his annoyance at the withdrawal of the Taboret, the Duke picked a quarrel with the Queen herself. A marriage was being discussed between Mademoiselle de Chevreuse and the Duke de Richelieu, nephew of the late Cardinal. For some mysterious reason the handsome, wealthy young peer had entangled himself with a Madame de Pons, a lady of uncertain age, unattractive appearance and dubious antecedents. Once again Condé interfered and engineered an elopement between Richelieu and the elderly charmer. Anne was furious at this contretemps and threatened to have the marriage annulled since her consent had not been obtained. Condé

retorted haughtily: "Marriages made in my presence are not made to be annulled."

More quarrels followed and Condé realized that his dictatorship was over. Forgetting his lordly announcement that he could "do nothing to shake the throne," he left the Court in a rage and joined the Fronde. Mazarin smiled with satisfaction. Now that he had won back the rest of the nobles, he was no longer afraid of his petulant lordship. Let him do his worst. His very presence in the ranks of the Fronde would weaken them.

Once again the shrewd Minister was right. Condé was received with acclaim by Parliament but he sowed dissension wherever he went. He was bored with debates about taxation, jealous of de Retz and Beaufort, disgusted with his loss of prestige. In a very short time he had quarrelled with the leaders of the Fronde and found himself cold-shouldered by both sides. It was at this point that Marie de Chevreuse stepped in and took control.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN the six months that had intervened since her return from exile, Marie de Chevreuse had made herself the guiding spirit of the Fronde. There were more spectacular figures gyrating about in the limelight. Each eddy in the political whirlpool threw up a new aspirant to fame, only to sweep him away to oblivion in the next upheaval. Parties formed and reformed, men and women changed sides with bewildering rapidity. Through the maze the Duchess moved serenely, sure of her aims and of her ability to achieve them.

The Coadjutor with his dynamic brilliance held the front of the stage but behind his dashing manœuvres was the cool brain of the veteran intriguante. Through her daughter, she drew him into the sphere of her influence; by her genius, she controlled him and, through him, Parliament and the people of Paris. Victor Cousin, the French historian whose monographs on this period have been crowned by the Academy, says authoritatively: "*La Fronde, c'etait Madame de Chevreuse.*"

De Retz, always a shrewd judge of character, is generous—for an egotist—in his praise of the women who worked hand-in-glove with him. "I never saw," he writes, "anyone in whom intuition could so supply the place of judgment. She suggested expedients

so brilliant that they seemed like flashes of lightning, and so wise that they need not have been disowned by the greatest men of any age."

In Condé's successive quarrels with the Court and the Fronde Marie saw a chance to rid France of a trouble-maker and to avenge the slights offered to her own family by the House of Condé. She had not welcomed him to the councils of the Fronde and was well pleased when he quarrelled with Beaufort and de Retz. At the same time, she did not want her party weakened by dissensions. In a flash she envisaged a new line-up, one that would eliminate Condé altogether. She planned a rapprochement between Court and Fronde, an offensive and defensive alliance designed to checkmate the swaggering Generalissimo.

Before the Duke could make his peace with the angry Queen, Marie approached Mazarin who fell in readily with her schemes. De Retz and the Cardinal, brought together under her auspices, agreed that the common danger could be best met by an alliance of forces. The next step was to reconcile de Retz to the Queen. Not for nothing had she been Anne's most intimate friend. She coached the Coadjutor with the wisdom of experience. "Seem pensive while she is speaking, and look constantly at her hands. She is very proud of them."

By a stroke of luck, Condé chose that moment to try the same game. He introduced at Court an insignificant little nincompoop called de Jarzé and told him to make love to the Queen. Like many small men,

de Jarzé was inordinately conceited and thought himself irresistible. His vanity and cocksureness so annoyed Anne that she dismissed him from her presence. Condé took umbrage at the dismissal of his protégé and made himself even more objectionable than usual.

De Retz shone by comparison with the scented little fop, de Jarzé. His clever ugly face, melodious voice and physical magnetism intrigued Anne and she conceived a genuine liking for him. Mazarin encouraged the new cordiality. He had once made the mistake of underrating the Coadjutor. Now he had learned his lesson and was eager to have him as an ally. The support of Madame de Chevreuse was equally desirable. She wielded enormous prestige and could bring in the Houses of Vendôme and Guise, thus affording a valuable counter-balance to Condé.

Behold them then, this ill-assorted quartette set to partners. While there was little love lost between the two couples, they had a common interest and worked together in harmony. It was a purely business arrangement with no illusions on either side. De Retz wrote of Mazarin, "I never approached the Cardinal without being persuaded that I was going to talk to the greatest impostor in the world. I never left him without being charmed by him."

Once re-established in the Queen's good graces, Marie worked steadily towards her main objective. This was nothing less than the absolute overthrow of Condé. She was not inclined to cherish a grudge over petty things but the feud between the Houses was of

long standing and the Duke had repeatedly been the aggressor. By breaking up the proposed match between her daughter and the Duke de Richelieu he had again offended. He was to be removed from the scene, if she could by any means contrive it.

With the help of de Retz she began to instil in the mind of Anne the idea that Condé was a chronic disturber of the peace who should be imprisoned. Both Anne and Mazarin were alarmed at the thought of such a drastic step and doubted their ability to accomplish it. To reinforce the quartette, Marie roped in other influential personages and undertook to win over the Lord-Lieutenant himself. Gaston had been so thoroughly cowed by Richelieu that he seemed to have lost his taste for intrigue. He was content now to sit quietly on the fence and watch others struggle. "With the skill born of twenty years of ceaseless intriguing," Marie went to work on his feeble mind and won him over.

Her best weapon was Gaston's jealousy of his brilliant cousin. Both were Princes of the Blood and of equal rank, but Gaston was a political nonentity while Condé was Generalissimo and the popular idol of France. Marie fanned this smouldering grievance into a flame and convinced Gaston that the removal of Condé would leave him the most influential figure in the Kingdom.

Anne, Mazarin and Gaston were at length convinced that Condé should be imprisoned, but it was more easily said than done. The army would rise in defence of their General and the House of Bourbon-Condé was too strong to be tackled with impunity.

Better never attempt it than fumble. To be successful the arrest must be a complete surprise, with no opportunity for defence or rescue.

Only seventeen people were in the secret and, for a wonder, it was not revealed. Beaufort was excluded from the inner circle. He was notoriously indiscreet and was still a slave to the charms of Madame de Montbazon, who was incapable of keeping a secret.

As a first step, Condé was tricked into signing the order for the military escort. No troops could be moved without his signature but Mazarin suavely informed him that a plot had been discovered against his (Condé's) life. He said that the guilty parties were to be imprisoned secretly and Condé obligingly signed an order for troops to be at a certain rendezvous to escort an indefinite number of unnamed prisoners to Vincennes.

Next, the order for the arrest must be signed by Gaston. When the time came, he was overwhelmed by his usual panic and tried to run away. He was caught between the leaves of a door and held there while pen and paper were pushed into his hand.

Every detail was planned in advance, every contingency provided for. When the time came for the actual arrests, everything went through like clockwork. One evening in January, Condé, Conti and de Longueville were picked up separately, brought to a rendezvous outside Paris and ordered into a closed coach. The military escort closed about them, and they were driven under cover of darkness to Vincennes. Before Paris knew what had happened, they were safely ensconced

behind high stone walls. Anne spent the critical hours devoutly praying in her oratory. Gaston fidgeted about with his hands in his pockets, whistling doleful ditties. When news came that everything had gone well, he cheered up immensely. "That was a good haul," he said complacently. "We have taken a bear, a monkey and a fox."

Opinions at Court and in the city were divided. There was a good deal of excitement but it soon spent itself in talk. Condé had made himself so unpopular that the Parisians felt no obligation to take up arms in his behalf. The family rose in wrath, but it would take time to organize their forces. As an additional precaution, the Princes were moved from Vincennes, which was close to Paris, to the gloomy fortress of Havre. There they remained for a year while the Frondeurs profited by their absence.

It should not be imagined for a moment that the Frondeurs were in politics for their health, or that they were actuated by any altruistic motives. Before engaging to rid Mazarin of his troublesome thorn in the flesh, they had bargained long and shrewdly. Each of the seventeen in the secret was to be rewarded in a practical manner. De Retz was to be recommended for a Cardinal's hat, an honor which he craved inordinately. Marie, as usual, asked a boon for someone else. Her share of the proceeds was the restoration to favor of Chateauneuf, who seemed to be permanently on her conscience. As Cousin says: "In all her aberrations, she retained this remnant of honor, that when she loved, she loved with unbounded

Better never attempt it than fumble. To be successful the arrest must be a complete surprise, with no opportunity for defence or rescue.

Only seventeen people were in the secret and, for a wonder, it was not revealed. Beaufort was excluded from the inner circle. He was notoriously indiscreet and was still a slave to the charms of Madame de Montbazon, who was incapable of keeping a secret.

As a first step, Condé was tricked into signing the order for the military escort. No troops could be moved without his signature but Mazarin suavely informed him that a plot had been discovered against his (Condé's) life. He said that the guilty parties were to be imprisoned secretly and Condé obligingly signed an order for troops to be at a certain rendezvous to escort an indefinite number of unnamed prisoners to Vincennes.

Next, the order for the arrest must be signed by Gaston. When the time came, he was overwhelmed by his usual panic and tried to run away. He was caught between the leaves of a door and held there while pen and paper were pushed into his hand.

Every detail was planned in advance, every contingency provided for. When the time came for the actual arrests, everything went through like clockwork. One evening in January, Condé, Conti and de Longueville were picked up separately, brought to a rendezvous outside Paris and ordered into a closed coach. The military escort closed about them, and they were driven under cover of darkness to Vincennes. Before Paris knew what had happened, they were safely ensconced

behind high stone walls. Anne spent the critical hours devoutly praying in her oratory. Gaston fidgeted about with his hands in his pockets, whistling doleful ditties. When news came that everything had gone well, he cheered up immensely. "That was a good haul," he said complacently. "We have taken a bear, a monkey and a fox."

Opinions at Court and in the city were divided. There was a good deal of excitement but it soon spent itself in talk. Condé had made himself so unpopular that the Parisians felt no obligation to take up arms in his behalf. The family rose in wrath, but it would take time to organize their forces. As an additional precaution, the Princes were moved from Vincennes, which was close to Paris, to the gloomy fortress of Havre. There they remained for a year while the Frondeurs profited by their absence.

It should not be imagined for a moment that the Frondeurs were in politics for their health, or that they were actuated by any altruistic motives. Before engaging to rid Mazarin of his troublesome thorn in the flesh, they had bargained long and shrewdly. Each of the seventeen in the secret was to be rewarded in a practical manner. De Retz was to be recommended for a Cardinal's hat, an honor which he craved inordinately. Marie, as usual, asked a boon for someone else. Her share of the proceeds was the restoration to favor of Chateauneuf, who seemed to be permanently on her conscience. As Cousin says: "In all her aberrations, she retained this remnant of honor, that when she loved, she loved with unbounded

fidelity, and after the passion died away she maintained for its object an inviolate friendship."

Chateauneuf was promised his old office of Keeper of the Seals, but it was not until July that Seguier resigned in his favor. De Retz fared even worse. So far from supporting his application for the Cardinalate, Mazarin was secretly working against it. He had been ready to promise anything and everything to rid himself of Condé. Once the Princes, through the efforts of the Fronde leaders, were safely cooped up behind stone walls, he thought better of it. This double-dealing, so characteristic of him, was to prove disastrous. It cost him the support of Madame de Chevreuse, de Retz and the Fronde, just when he needed it most.

The sudden arrest of the heads of the House of Condé had found the family unprepared. It was not long, however, before they had risen to the occasion. With the men imprisoned, the women flung themselves into the breach. The old Dowager Duchess, almost at the end of her long life, came to Paris and besieged Court and Parliament with pleas. Condé's wife, a frail retiring little woman, took her son and boldly rode to Bordeaux. Sitting on her horse like an Amazon, with the banner of the House floating above her, she called on the city to rise in defence of its feudal lord.

Meanwhile the Duchess de Longueville fled to Normandy and raised an army of her husband's tenants. When threatened with arrest herself she dressed as a man, and took ship for Holland. She was shipwrecked, half-drowned, rescued and finally reached the

Netherlands. There she met Turenne, who was in command of a royal army. She won him over to the cause of her brothers and joined him at the head of his troops. The militant lovers went further and recruited the very Spanish forces against which Turenne had lately been fighting.

Bouillon, always delighted at the thought of a rebellion, stirred up trouble in Guienne and Champagne before joining the Duchess de Condé at Bordeaux and, in Poitou, a contingent was raised for "The Army of Release."

At once the whole country was aflame. Anne with Mazarin and the little King marched off at the head of a royal army to besiege Bordeaux. Behind them Turenne and Madame de Longueville threatened the border with their Spanish allies. Small battles were fought but the General and his lady love were evidently not concentrating on military operations. Love was too engrossing to leave them time to press their attack. In the midst of it all the old dowager died in Paris, sending a final message to her daughter, "that poor foolish woman at Stenay."

There were fine doings in the Provinces, with women careering about the country like Amazons, wearing armor, leading armies, appointing themselves generals. Madame de Longueville and the Duchess de Condé both took the field and the royal banner of France flew over the tent from which Anne watched her troops do battle. Anne de Gonzague, Princess Palatine, was racing about France disguised as a page, vainly trying to

catch the Archbishop of Rheims with whom she was infatuated. La Grande Mademoiselle was not going to miss any of the fun, and set out with her friend, the Countess de Frontenac. While the husband of the latter lady was holding New France against the Iroquois, his wife was making herself gloriously conspicuous in the vicinity of Orleans, where she and La Grande Mademoiselle made their way into the city via the moat. From Paris Gaston wrote to these two harmless lunatics, addressing his letters "A Mesdames les Marechales-de-Camp, dans l'Armée contre Mazarin."

It will be noticed that he called it "the army against Mazarin." The nobles on both sides kept up the polite fiction that they were fighting loyally to rescue their King from the thralldom of the Italian usurper. While Anne and Mazarin were attempting with small success to quell this hydra-headed monster of sedition, matters were becoming complicated in Paris. The Cardinal's failure to keep his compact with the leaders of the Fronde had turned their friendship into enmity and they took advantage of his absence to stir up new trouble at home.

He had left the affairs of State in the hands of a council composed of Gaston, Chateauneuf, de Retz, etc. Marie, still determined to compensate Chateauneuf for all his sufferings, backed him up in his attempts to supplant Mazarin as Minister of State. With that end in view she worked on Gaston, urging him to proclaim himself Regent and dismiss Mazarin. It was a

splendid opportunity but Monsieur shrank from any decisive action. While he dithered, his associates gave him up as hopeless and looked elsewhere for a leader.

Mazarin was tottering, and a single concerted effort would push him from his exalted perch. A strong man was needed and Condé seemed the obvious person. If he could be induced to co-operate with the Fronde, success was assured. A year before, Marie de Chevreuse had been instrumental in having him imprisoned. Now she decided to have him released.

Many attempts had been made to effect the escape of the prisoners but each had been discovered or betrayed. Marie was all in favor of direct action. Friends could bribe guards, the Condé women could call out armies and raise a dust in the Provinces. Madame la Duchesse de Chevreuse had no faith in such hit-or-miss efforts. She was a politician and a champion log-roller. Once convinced that Condé would play ball with her and her friends, she would free him by constitutional methods.

That winter, while the "Army of Release" was ravaging France without effecting anything else, negotiations were quietly going on between the Princes and the Fronde, with the Princess Palatine as go-between. Letters were smuggled in and out as though prison walls were figments of the imagination. After much writing back and forth and haggling about terms a treaty was formally signed, dated January 30, 1651. In this extraordinary document it was agreed that the little Duke d'Enghien, Condé's son, should marry one of

Gaston's daughters by his second wife, and that Marie's daughter, Charlotte Marie de Lorraine, should wed the Prince de Conti. De Retz was to have his cherished Cardinal's hat and Chateauneuf be made Prime Minister in place of Mazarin, who was consigned to outer darkness. Beaufort was assigned the Admiralty for which he had been clamoring so long and Madame de Montbazon was granted a "sweetener" of 90,000 crowns on condition that she kept her lover in line.

The political importance of this treaty cannot be overestimated. It united Gaston and Condé and healed the breach between the two great rival houses of Guise-Lorraine and Bourbon-Condé. For the first time the noblesse and the Fronde presented a solid front and could act in concert against Mazarin. Incidentally the treaty made Condé the most powerful man in the kingdom. It put him at the head of a party composed of all the most active political and aristocratic factions in France and arranged for matrimonial alliances that would make the combine permanent. Most important of all, for Condé, it brought over to his side the woman who had been his most effective opponent. To quote Victor Cousin: "By this treaty, Madame de Chevreuse brought to Condé the finest mind in the Fronde, audacious in the scope of her schemes, consummate in experience; and gave him the support of three powerful families, de Rohan, de Luynes and Lorraine."

At the last moment Gaston once again endangered the whole arrangement by refusing to sign the paper. His eccentricities, however, were well known.

He was locked into a room and kept there until he had put his signature to the treaty.

Once in possession of this astounding document, de Retz went before the Parliament and formally demanded the release of the Princes. The deputies endorsed his petition and passed it on the Queen. It was the last straw. The whole country was in a turmoil. Turenne and his Spaniards were advancing from the east, and now Paris had turned against her. Hitherto, Mazarin had contrived to keep the opposition divided against itself. Now, thanks to the organizing ability of Marie de Chevreuse, all the parties opposed to him were united. He bowed to the inevitable and prepared to flee from France. In the face of such overwhelming strength arrayed against her, Anne was forced to let him go and agreed meekly to the release of the Princes.

Mazarin set out for the border but in a last effort to save something from the wreck of his career, he asked Anne to give him the order for the release of the prisoners. Armed with this, he went to Havre. With smiling suavity, he announced to the Princes that they were free and tried to convey the impression that it was due to his own tireless efforts. To his great chagrin Condé received his ingratiating remarks with derisive laughter and treated him like a lackey. The Princes had been informed of each step in the negotiations for their release and knew exactly what part the Cardinal had played.

The three Princes travelled south in state while the crest-fallen Cardinal made his way over the border into Germany. Wild with joy at his fall, the

mob wrecked his house, plundered his possessions and swamped Paris beneath a flood of obscene pamphlets.

Life without Mazarin was so unbearable to Anne that she decided to join him. "All for love and the world well lost." Better exile in Germany with her lover than a throne in France. She had actually made her preparations for flight, when Marie warned de Retz. He passed the warning on to Parliament which was determined to keep their King in Paris. A close guard was set around the Palais Royal. Coaches and wagons passing out through the gates were stopped and searched. A delegation of deputies even forced its way into the royal nursery to make sure that the King had not been spirited away. Anne was forced to stand meekly by while the citizens filed solemnly past the bed where the royal child lay sleeping.

After that humiliating experience, Anne gave up all thought of flight and resigned herself to an existence only made bearable by daily letters. She wrote exhaustive accounts of the daily happenings, while Mazarin from his refuge at Cologne dictated her policy and gave her reams of good advice. Some of it dealt with the general welfare of France, but the greater part was devoted to the manœuvres necessary to bring about his own recall.

The combine between Condé and Gaston, with Marie de Chevreuse in support, was the most pressing danger and he urged Anne at all costs to break up the proposed marriages. "The safety of the State and of Their Majesties," he wrote, "depends on the disunion of

the Princes, since Their said Majesties, by choosing whichever of the two they judge most suitable, could dictate the law to the other, and could work with some promise of success for the re-establishment of the royal authority."

Anne did her best by refusing her consent to the betrothals but a trifle like that was not likely to deter either Condé or Marie de Chevreuse. There were other forces at work which disrupted the *entente cordiale*. Marie had the mind of a statesman and had built up a combine that could have controlled France. It was wrecked by the megalomania of Condé and the senseless jealousy of two women.

Lavallee, in his "Histoire de France" writes: "When the ladies chose to play a part in politics they brought into public affairs their sordid passions, narrow views and frivolous ideas." Unfortunately for Marie de Chevreuse, his statement is correct.

The Duchess de Montbazon started the trouble. She had always resented her step-daughter's greater popularity and prestige. Now she was jealous of Charlotte Marie who was by way of being the belle of the Fronde. She even announced in public that she "could not understand what de Retz saw in that old woman who was more wicked than the devil and the daughter who was as foolish as her mother was wicked." She had cheerfully pocketed the 90,000 crowns allotted to her in the treaty but her spiteful malice drove her to wreck the whole scheme.

Once before Madame de Montbazon had stirred up a satisfactory scandal by handing around some love letters.

With lamentable lack of originality she repeated her tactics. This time the *billets-doux* purported to be written by Charlotte to the Duke de Noirmoutiers. They were salacious epistles, most unseemly as coming from the pen of a "*jeune fille bien élevée.*" Probably Madame la Duchesse wrote them herself but Charlotte had been somewhat indiscreet in her flirtations and there were grounds for gossip.

There was much whispering in boudoirs, many broad hints dropped at the clubs but it was the egregious Gaston who brought the whole thing out into the open. It was to his interest to see that the terms of the treaty were carried out, but he could never resist the opportunity to make a smutty joke. With his penchant for calling a spade an adjectival shovel he credited Charlotte with having shared her favors between de Retz, Noirmoutiers and a certain Caumartin.

The Coadjutor played a curious part in the affair. In theory, he was in favor of the match and professed to be working for it. In actual fact, he was in love with Mademoiselle himself and shrank from seeing her the bride of the feeble-minded Conti. His conduct was ambiguous, to say the least, and on several occasions he implied, with a gratified smirk, that he had robbed the Prince of the privilege of "*les premiers noces.*"

While society was a-thrill with this latest scandal, Anne struck another blow at the *entente*. Without warning she took the Seals away from Chateauneuf and gave them to Mathew Molé. This sudden action was probably dictated from Cologne but Anne had never liked Chateauneuf and regarded him as Mazarin's most dangerous departmental rival. A few weeks later, she could have dismissed him with impunity. As it was, she found herself facing an angry deputation of Frondeurs, demanding the instant re-instatement of Chateauneuf.

Condé, Gaston, de Retz, Beaufort, Rochefoucauld and a few other leaders of the Fronde had been in conference at the Hôtel de Chevreuse when they received the news of Chateauneuf's dismissal. They had sprung to the rescue at once and were so vigorous in their protests that the bewildered Molé in turn was dismissed. Seguier, however, got the Seals, leaving Chateauneuf in the cold.

This was perhaps the last concerted action taken by the group involved in the treaty. The combine was already on the verge of dissolution, and it was the Duchess de Longueville who finally wrecked it.

As Cousin says: "Madame de Longueville had none of the good judgment, the sagacity and the consummate tact that made Madame de Chevreuse one of the great politicians of the age." In the last analysis, Anne-Genevieve was a highly-sexed woman with a mania for notoriety. Jealousy blinded her to practical considerations and drove her to destroy a constructive scheme which would have insured the supremacy of her family.

After all her Amazonian adventures in the Provinces, it was doubtless annoying to find that

another woman had been responsible for the release of her brothers. There was also, perhaps, a reluctance to see her beloved Conti married to a pretty girl with whom he was already half in love. Until now Conti had always adored his sister to the exclusion of all other women, and she was loath to see him escaping from her. That may explain her savage opposition to the proposed match. In any case, she threw the whole weight of her influence against it. Bits of gossip picked up in various drawing-rooms were repeated to her lordly elder brother with disastrous results.

Condé made inquiries for himself and found plenty of kind friends eager to tell him of the scandals going about. Monseigneur informed his brother coldly that the marriage would not take place. Conti had been much attracted to his cheerful young fiancée but was helpless before the combined wills of Condé and Anne-Genevieve.

Tactless as ever, Condé did not trouble to consult the bride's parents. He merely informed his friends that he had reconsidered the matter of his brother's marriage. The news spread like wildfire and quickly reached the ears of Madame de Chevreuse. At once she took the initiative and suggested to Condé that the arrangement should be cancelled. To friends who came to inquire and commiserate, she said with a careless shrug: "Promises made in prison are never meant to be kept." Charlotte laughed and treated the affair as an amusing episode, but society was all agog over the jilting of Mademoiselle de Chevreuse. One chatty soul wrote to

Mazarin: "You cannot imagine the disorder and confusion that have resulted. All the pride and glory of the House are fled. The fair Princess must turn her thoughts to a convent rather than to a husband. No suitor can now present himself and in this matter she may well be pitied."

The writer's pathetic picture does more credit to his imagination than to his foresight. Charlotte had not the slightest intention of retiring to a convent and Marie de Chevreuse was not the woman to sit on the ground in sackcloth and ashes, bewailing her fate. Not even Prince Louis de Bourbon-Condé himself could insult her daughter and go unpunished.

In a quiet business-like way that boded no good for her enemy, Marie went on the war-path against the man who had not thought Charlotte good enough for his half-witted brother. She had released Condé from prison, lined up an immensely strong party for him, put the whole game in his hands. In return, he had insulted her daughter and broken his pledged word. From now on it was a duel *à l'outrance*, without quarter and without mercy. Before Marie laid down her arms she had seen Condé a fugitive and a traitor, fighting against his own country under the banner of Spain.

On April 17 the engagement was broken off. On April 20 Marie wrote to a friend in Cologne: "I beg you to acquaint the Cardinal with all speed that in the present state of affairs at Court there is an opportunity of serving him by means which are apparent, provided that he bids the Queen place confidence in me, and that

he keeps the secret to himself. The Cardinal can rest assured of being well-served."

Marie was going back to Mazarin and the Queen but she was not going alone. Like a skilled politician, she manipulated her party, moving them hither and thither on the political chess board as occasion arose. In 1650, she brought the Fronde over to Mazarin and checked Condé. The next year, she gave the Fronde to Condé and drove out Mazarin. Six months later we find her returning to her allegiance to Anne, bringing with her the formidable group she controlled. From then on she never wavered and ended her political career as she had begun it, the friend and supporter of Anne of Austria.

Mazarin grasped eagerly at the olive-branch so unexpectedly extended to him. He was weary of his lonely exile and longed to regain his mastery over France and its Queen. In Marie and de Retz he saw the only two people who could bring about his recall. Without a moment's delay he wrote to Anne, directing her to become reconciled with Madame la Duchesse and to be guided by her in everything. The Queen obediently summoned Marie to her side, greeted her with the old happy intimacy and assured her that all past misunderstandings were forgotten. As a proof of her sincerity, Chateauneuf was recalled and, for the third or fourth time, made Keeper of the Seals.

De Retz shared in the sudden burst of enthusiasm. He was so elated by the warmth of his reception that he took it as a tribute to his personal charms.

With renewed ardor he wooed his royal mistress but was forced to admit defeat. Mazarin was out of the way, but his absence only made Anne's heart grow fonder. The Coadjutor recorded his defeat in his diary with the pungent comment: "The benefice was unoccupied but it was not vacant" an ecclesiastical technicality that is not worth elucidation.

The rapprochement between the Court and the Fronde was duly recognized in a secret treaty that proved mutually advantageous. The Frondeurs promised to work for the return of Mazarin as soon as it should be politic and advisable. In the meantime, Chateauneuf was to be acting Prime Minister on the understanding that he should have the highest place in the Cabinet after Mazarin's return. Molé was given the Seals and de Retz his Cardinal's hat. In return Marie and the Coadjutor pledged their loyal and lasting support to Anne and Mazarin. To bind the bargain, Charlotte Marie was betrothed to the Cardinal's nephew, Phillippe de Mancini, who was to be made a Peer of France with the title of Duke de Nevers. So much for the pessimists who confidently consigned Mademoiselle to a convent.

No sooner had the treaty been signed than Marie gave evidence of her good faith. She persuaded Charles of Lorraine to sign a formal pledge to support the royalist cause, and capped that by bringing Gaston back into the fold. This left Condé standing alone.

The break-up of the Condé-Chevreuse combine threw society into a turmoil with everything at

loose ends. The marriage between Gaston's daughter and the Duke d'Enghien was now broken off. Deprived of any organized support, bereft of the sagacious counsel of Marie de Chevreuse, Condé was all at sea. He celebrated by antagonizing some of his friends and making a few more enemies.

On the battle-field, Condé was one of the greatest generals of all time. Swift to see an opportunity, swifter to act, he constantly caught his opponents off guard. Without being a profound strategist, he had initiative, brilliance and that quality of leadership that inspires an army to deeds of incredible valor. To his men he was a hero, almost a god. To his officers he was a variety of things, none of them fit to live with. His staff was constantly changing as quarrels drove the gentleman-cadets away, and his tactless insolence alienated other generals with whom he should have co-operated.

In peace time he showed this same cantankerous spirit. Some contrary demon seemed to take possession of him and he would go out of his way to tread heavily on the corns of the very men who should at all costs have been conciliated. He had quarrelled with the Queen, quarrelled with Mazarin, quarrelled with the Fronde and topped it off by antagonizing Madame de Chevreuse. In his sublime indifference to public opinion he did not realize his isolation until it was too late. So swiftly had Marie acted, so skilfully had she worked that everything was settled in a few weeks. Bewildered and incredulous, Condé found that his enemies were supreme at Court while he was ignored. In a belated

attempt to assert himself he struck out blindly, with the unfortunate Chateauneuf as the target of his wrath.

With colossal impudence Condé went to the Queen and demanded the dismissal of Chateauneuf for the simple reason that he disliked him. Marie de Chevreuse countered by demanding the arrest of Condé. It was only a gesture of defiance but it made the General very uneasy in his mind. He had already found to his cost that the Duchess could be a dangerous enemy and he was conscious of having given her every cause to hate him. To be on the safe side, he withdrew with a small group of intimates to the outskirts of Paris, and from there continued his attacks on Chateauneuf. As an alternative he threatened to raise the banner of revolt.

Rather than plunge the country into further civil war, Anne decided to sacrifice the acting Minister of State. She sent a courier to inform Condé that Chateauneuf had been dismissed, but the bird had flown. In the early dawn he had heard the trampling of hooves, the rumble of wheels and voices calling through the morning mist. Convinced that it was a troop of guards come to arrest him, he leaped on his horse and rode away, very much *en deshabille*. That evening everyone in Paris was chuckling over a new and exquisite jest. The Great Condé, idol of the army, hero of Rocroi and Lens, had been put to flight by a few poultrymen bringing eggs to market.

A trivial mistake drove Condé away from Paris. An equally foolish error kept him away. As soon as Anne heard that he had gone, she sent an express

courier after him, offering terms that would have satisfied his demands. Condé was at *Anger*ville but the courier misread his directions and went to *Auger*ville. By the time he delivered his dispatches, Milord was already far from Paris and said that it was not worth the trouble of going back.

Fear of ridicule and childish petulance drove him into open rebellion and plunged the country once again into the horrors of civil war.

CHAPTER XIX

THE victory of the poultrymen was in July. That summer Condé sulked at St. Maur and sought consolation in the arms of the blonde Duchess de Chatillon. With him were the Prince de Conti, the Duke and Duchess de Longueville, Turenne and his brother, the Duke de Bouillon, Rochefoucauld, the Duke de Nemours and a few other noble adherents.

Amid the sylvan glades of the Condé country estate they wrote poetry, played at amateur theatricals, made promiscuous love and indulged in a little desultory conspiracy. In Paris the wits dubbed this group *"Les Incertains."* Later this title was replaced by *"Les Petits-Maitres"* because they all, in their own small way, wanted to be masters of France.

After frittering away most of the summer, Condé betook himself to Guienne and raised the standard of revolt. To show his defiance of the Queen, he scientifically laid waste the fields of the helpless peasants and then was annoyed by their reluctance to join his army. He had counted on the prestige of his name to rouse the Huguenots, but they too failed him. Appeals to Cromwell in England were contemptuously ignored. The Protector remarked on one occasion that the only man in France he feared was de Retz. He had no interest in

the eccentric proceedings of young Condé. Only Phillip of Spain lent a sympathetic ear to Condé's appeal for help. A treaty was signed by which Phillip supplied a few troops in exchange for the promise of certain territories he coveted.

This was something to the good, but it was more than counter-balanced by the defection of many of his French colleagues. The aged de Longueville, weary of all this turbulence, retired to his estates in Normandy. Madame de Longueville remained, but she was worse than useless. She had won Turenne over to her brother's cause in the past, but now the bonds that held him were wearing thin. His infatuation for the blue-eyed beauty was already a thing of the past. Five years before the Duchess had been called the loveliest woman in France and her aloof dignity had compelled respect. In the rough and tumble of the Fronde, the bloom had been rubbed off. Casual amours had smirched her chaste beauty, and she showed signs of having inherited her father's dislike for water, applied externally. With true Gallic frankness, a contemporary wrote that she was still beautiful but was not very clean and far from fragrant—"*mal propre et sentait mal.*"

The tender memory of past delights might have triumphed over present malodorousness, but the Duchess made no attempt to hold her former adorer. She was after new game. Just when her brother had most need of supporters, she abandoned Turenne and fell violently in love with the Duke de Nemours. He, in turn was enamored of the blonde Chatillon who had

caught the roving eye of Condé. Condé sent Nemours to Flanders to raise troops and took advantage of his absence to steal his mistress. He bestowed on La Belle Chatillon two rich abbeys, and she repaid him by "giving him the income of a property of which Nemours was the proprietor."

No longer bound to Condé's cause by his affair with Madame de Longueville, Turenne deserted him and offered his services to the Queen. With him went Bouillon, disgusted by Condé's peevish insolence. The Prince was thus left with his tenant army and a few Spanish levies to face the royal army.

Even so, his unique military genius made him more than a match for the Queen's troops. At one point he was within an ace of capturing the Queen herself and was only prevented by the masterly tactics of Turenne, so lately his ally. With a few thousand men on each side, Condé, Turenne and Anne waltzed aimlessly around in Guienne, accomplishing little but doing unlimited damage. It has been estimated that during the Regency of Anne more Frenchmen were killed by their compatriots than by foreign enemies.

Meanwhile, the leaders of the Fronde, secretly committed to the cause of Mazarin, informed him that the time was ripe for his return. He suddenly appeared at the border with an army of eight thousand men, armed, equipped and paid out of his private purse. With drums beating, flags flying and his men stepping boldly out in fine green uniforms, the Cardinal marched triumphantly through the country that had expelled him

the year before. Before him went a succession of swift couriers keeping Anne informed of his progress. "I shall see you in fifteen days," he writes jubilantly. "In saying that, I am beside myself. Think what will happen when I see the Queen. Believe me that I am yours to the last sigh."

Anne was so lost in contemplation of what would probably happen that she spent days standing at a window, her yearning eyes fixed on the horizon and her expansive bosom heaving with emotion. Even in those critical days the Court had many a quiet giggle over the edifying sight of the stout Queen in love.

The news of Mazarin's approach threw Paris into hopeless confusion. Parliament met and, after hours and hours of furious debate, issued an edict forbidding him to come any further. While they talked, two men of intelligence and initiative went out and tried to break down a bridge over which the Cardinal's troops would pass. The deputies suspended operations long enough to indict the two for damaging public property. Then they fell to talking again.

Perhaps the Machiavellian hand of de Retz can be seen in the paralysis that overtook the Parliamentary body. No action was taken, and Mazarin's troops effected a meeting with the army of the Queen. The combined forces now converged on the rebel Duke.

Finding himself outnumbered in Guienne, Condé executed one of those brilliant, unexpected coups that won him his title of "The Great." With a few supporters he flung himself into Paris, barricaded the gates

and announced that he had come to protect the city from the Italian tyrant. The Fronde leaders were much taken aback by this sudden development and the more conservative citizens were aghast but the mob were strongly in his favor. Beaufort organized the dregs of the populace into "the Straw Army," so-called because they wore wisps of straw in their caps in lieu of uniform. With this rabble he terrorized the city and forced Parliament to fall in with Condé's wishes.

As Lord-Lieutenant of the kingdom, Gaston was responsible for the government during the Queen's absence. He should have taken some decisive action but the sudden crisis reduced him to a state of futile imbecility. He retired to bed, suffering from what de Retz called "a diplomatic attack" and left Condé a clear field.

Lord of all he surveyed, the Duke swaggered about, declaring that he would defend Paris against Mazarin to the last gasp. To strengthen his position, he sent for Charles of Lorraine and his mercenaries. His own army had by now come up and were encamped outside the walls. The armies of Mazarin and the Queen occupied the wooded slopes above Charenton, while Turenne manœuvred about in the vicinity. Duke Charles arrived with his battalion, took up a strategic position among the market-gardens and turned vegetarian.

The Lorrainer was the crux of the situation and his intentions were a matter of acute interest to both parties. Condé had paid him to come to his aid; Mazarin paid him more to go away. Charles cheerfully

took money from both sides and stayed where he was. There was method in his madness. He was very comfortable on the fence and intended to stay there until he saw which side had most chance of winning. In the meantime his army was being fed free, gratis and for nothing on the food supply of Paris. All day he sat at ease in his tent playing the guitar and singing improper ballads. Condé raved, Mazarin fussed and the citizens mournfully watched their salads vanishing beyond recall.

It was Marie de Chevreuse who solved the problem in characteristic fashion. Disguised as a market-women she and Charlotte made their way to the Lorrainer's camp. Charles greeted his old love with enthusiasm and played the part of a romantic cavalier without a serious thought in his head. "Let us dance, Madame. It is far more becoming to you than talking politics."

Marie was not to be put off with airy persiflage. She knew her man, knew what she wanted and knew how to get it. In a very short time she had reasserted her old sway over his volatile mind and reduced him to a proper state of obedience. The next morning he dressed in feminine attire, slipped through the gates with the market-women and met Marie at Chateauneuf's house. There he signed an agreement to leave France immediately. With Mazarin's money in one pocket, Condé's in another and a baggage train piled high with plunder, he led his men away, leaving Condé stranded.

The desertion of Lorraine was a blow to Condé. Still more harm was done to his cause by his own

insolence and lack of tact. His sudden entry into the city had given him the advantage and he had a strong weapon in the universal hatred of Mazarin. Beaufort had given him the mob and it would have been easy to win over the influential citizens by the exercise of a little diplomacy. Whom the Gods would destroy, they first make mad. Condé's behavior at this critical stage in his career can hardly be called rational.

The deputies, like all legislators, were imbued with a deep sense of their own importance and did not like to be hurried. Condé would march into the Hôtel de Ville, brush aside their courteous greetings and lay down the law with the air of a victorious general addressing a conquered people. He wished it clearly understood that he was the master and would brook no opposition. Some deputies who dared to question his commands were beaten in the streets and the mob broke a number of legal heads.

Condé wished to be proclaimed Regent and Protector of the young King. Parliament demurred at such a proposal and contented themselves with attacking Mazarin. They denounced him as the enemy of the State and offered a reward of ten thousand francs for his capture, alive or dead. To raise the necessary sum, they sold the Cardinal's own library. Paris was enchanted by this extraordinary edict. Not for generations had anyone had a price put on his head. The wits placarded the town with notices offering so many francs for cutting off the Cardinal's nose, so many for his ears and a larger sum

for depriving him of what he doubtless treasured most highly.

No one took the proclamation seriously except Mazarin himself. With visions of being made a eunuch to amuse the young sparks of Paris, he urged the young King to take action. Louis formally abolished the Parliament of Paris and called on the loyal deputies to meet at Pontoise. A few obeyed the summons. The rest continued to function at the Hôtel de Ville. Two Parliaments were now in existence, each busily occupied in cancelling the edicts of the other.

The Parisian Chamber felt the King's order as a blow to their prestige and held Condé responsible. De Retz stiffened their resistance to the Duke's demands while Beaufort's rabble kept Paris in a turmoil. To add to the confusion the young nobles brawled in the streets and fought duels after every drunken debauch. Beaufort killed the Duke de Nemours in a duel and two of the seconds in the affair were mortally wounded. Even Condé himself was almost involved in an "affair of honor." He and the Count de Reuil boxed each other's ears in public but Gaston put the Count in the Bastille and the matter was allowed to drop.

For the second time the King and his mother were encamped in the suburbs, while Paris manned its walls against them. This time, however, Condé was inside and the Parisians were not at all sure that they wanted him there. He made things altogether too difficult. Distracted by riots, bullied by Condé, harangued by de Retz, harassed by the rival Parliament

at Pontoise, the deputies were at their wits' end. While they argued and debated in agonies of indecision, the reckless impatience of Condé drove him into a crime against humanity and common sense.

He called a full meeting of the deputies and, for the last time, ordered them to accede to his wishes. When they hesitated, he shouted something to the effect that they should be taught a lesson and stamped out. No sooner had he emerged than the Hôtel de Ville became the centre of a howling mob. Shots rang out from loop-holes ready-cut in nearby houses, and some of the deputies were shot down as they came out. Smoke began to curl from the windows and in a few minutes the whole building was a mass of flames. The stout stone walls resisted the fire but the inside was a furnace with all the exits guarded by the straw-decked mob.

La Grande Mademoiselle was an emotional creature. She was one of Condé's most enthusiastic supporters but the sight of the trapped deputies yelling for help from the upper windows roused her facile sympathies. She rushed to the Tuileries for help but found her father ambling about with his hands in his pockets, a prey to his usual helpless indecision. He only whistled nervously when she described the plight of the deputies. In despair she turned to Condé, but His Highness was pleased to be humorous "The mob are so rough," he murmured in a deprecating voice. "I really do not like to interfere; I have always been such a timid man."

At last Mademoiselle found Beaufort and dragged him off to the scene of the catastrophe. The ap-

pearance of their two popular idols soon changed the temper of the rabble. They fell to work extinguishing the fire and rescued the terrified deputies—at a price. When the panic was over inquiries were made and revealed the fact that Condé's confidential valet had led the mob. All the evidence pointed to the Duke as the instigator of the massacre, and his stock in Paris sank to zero.

Thick-skinned and indifferent to public opinion as he was, Condé was forced to realize that his presence in Paris was no longer desired. Loudly declaring that the place was a hornet's nest of Mazarinites, he withdrew the light of his countenance from the relieved city and joined his army outside the walls. A few days later, on July 2, he was attacked by Turenne.

Outnumbered and outmanœuvred, Condé was beaten back and made his last stand at the Porte St. Antoine. For hours he and a gallant little band of survivors fought with their backs to the gate and stood off the onslaught of the royalist army. The Duke himself fought like a man possessed, and a ring of corpses marked the scene of that last stand. He was at his last gasp when La Grande Mademoiselle came to the rescue.

During the battle she had been hysterical with excitement and kept begging her father to rescue Condé from his perilous predicament. Gaston could not make up his mind. As de Retz says: "He walked about the palace uncertain of his course. He was alarmed by the firing, afraid to relieve Condé, afraid to leave him unrelieved, and whistled every tune he had ever heard in the Place Royale." Despairing of any help from him,

Mademoiselle finally nagged her father into giving her a blank order with his signature. Armed with this, she went to the Bastille and called for volunteers to help the Duke. The response was nil, but in her excited state Mademoiselle felt herself the equal of a whole army corps. She dashed to the parapet, trained a cannon on the royal standard that floated over the King's tent and fired. As the cannon ball whistled over the tent and crashed into the camp behind, Mazarin remarked grimly: "That shot killed a husband."

It did indeed put an end to all Mademoiselle's hopes of marrying her royal cousin, but she was past caring. She had by now conceived a mad infatuation for Condé and fully intended to marry him as soon as his wife should be obliging enough to die. Abandoning her cannon, she rushed to the Porte St. Antoine, showed her order, and commanded the officer on guard to open the gate. Condé reeled inside with his few remaining comrades. The gates clanged shut again in the face of Turenne's pursuing army and Condé was saved.

Covered with dust and blood, black with powder and hoarse with exhaustion, Condé was a terrifying spectacle. His comrades were in even worse case. Most of them were wounded. Rochefoucauld, among others, had received a sword-cut over the eye that made him blind for months. Outside the gate were hundreds of corpses, slain in that futile and bloody struggle. The flower of French nobility lay trampled in the dust, and among them was the sixteen-year old Phillippe de Mancini, the fiancé of Charlotte Marie de Lorraine.

The Battle of Porte St. Antoine, desperate as it was, left the situation almost unchanged. The royalist army had been victorious but could not enter Paris. Condé's army had been cut to pieces, but he was alive and within the walls. He still had a small clique in Parliament who were willing, at a price, to look after his interests. From the Hôtel de Ville came a proclamation making Gaston Dictator, appointing Condé Generalissimo, and ordering the banishment of Mazarin. From Pontoise came edicts reversing those of Paris but agreeing that the Cardinal should be sent from the kingdom. The fate of the Minister was the only thing on which all parties were agreed. As Voltaire says: "Hatred of Mazarin had become the essential duty of every Frenchman."

With the blind obstinacy of infatuation, Anne would have clung to her lover in the face of all France, but the young King took command of the situation. He was now fourteen years old and already showed a statesmanlike grasp of essentials. Since Mazarin was the stumbling-block in the way of peace he must be sacrificed, for the time being, to the popular clamor. Louis was bent on restoring law and order to his turbulent realm. For four years he had led a life of acute and undignified discomfort. He had been driven from pillar to post and had frequently, in the course of his nomadic existence, found himself without fire, bedding or sufficient food.

Louis decided that one could have too much of that sort of thing. It must stop. He was King of France and intended to enjoy his royal prerogatives. He

had, after all, little reason to love the Cardinal. Like his father before him, Louis had been kept in the background while an Italian favorite made love to his mother and usurped supreme power. La Porte in his memoirs even accuses Mazarin of taking a most unseemly advantage of his position as unofficial step-father. Along sexual lines Mazarin would appear to have belonged to the Italian school.

Whether from personal or political motives, Louis yielded to the wishes of his people. A royal edict was issued, banishing Mazarin from France but paying a gracious tribute to his past services. Hardly had he reached the border when a joyful delegation waited on His Majesty. The King was begged to return to Paris and assured of whole-hearted allegiance from all classes. In October Louis XIV and Anne entered the city in state amid the frenzied acclamations of the populace. The King had come to his own again and the Fronde was over.

The banishment of Mazarin deprived Condé of his last excuse for rebellion. From being the romantic leader of a lost cause, he found himself in the embarrassing position of having no cause to fight for and no followers to lead. He had alienated all but a few personal adherents, and the waverers were caught up in the great wave of loyalty that was sweeping the country.

He could still have tendered his submission to the King but his stiff neck would not bow to the inevitable. As Louis approached Paris, Condé fled Southwards. When next heard of, he was fighting under the banner of Spain, the country he had fought against so

successfully. Possessed by the twin devils of pride and ambition he had rushed down the Gadarene slope of sedition into the black sea of treason. The rest of France, freed from the madness that had afflicted it, returned to normal. Peace was restored and the hot-headed extravagances of the Fronde seemed like the pointless lunacies of a nightmare.

In dealing with his rebellious people, Louis showed rare sagacity and tempered justice with mercy. His great aim was to restore normal conditions and he contented himself with banishing from Paris those ring-leaders who had been most prominent in the recent disturbances. Gaston, stripped of all his titles and offices, was sent to his estates at Blois. Thanks to the fortune of La Grande Mademoiselle, her father was enabled to live in luxurious ease with his hypochrondriacal wife and bevy of daughters. The hysterical heroine of the Bastille, whose prowess with the cannon was still fresh in the King's mind, was also banished to the country.

She amused herself at first by corresponding with Condé and toyed with the idea of financing a rebellion to restore him to power. A curt warning from the King dampened her ardor, and Mademoiselle fell back on less dangerous diversions. She kept a voluminous diary which was later expanded into her memoirs. A series of imaginary love affairs filled her mind, and she weighed carefully the claims of all the crowned heads of Europe, single or married. Finally, when over forty, La Grande Mademoiselle fell violently in love with a penniless young Gascon adventurer named Lauzun, who married her for

her money. He was dismissed from Court for hiding under Madame de Montespan's bed to listen in on the royal transports and left his infatuated wife the poorer for their short romance. So, sighing and languishing, La Grande Mademoiselle passes from the stage.

Beaufort, the fair-haired King of the Markets, was deprived of his offices and exiled. The Duchess de Montbazon, the person chiefly to blame for his activities, was banished from Court.

De Retz was treated with more severity than his colleagues but he brought his fate on himself. He alone seemed unwilling to accept the new order of things and showed signs of readiness to foment new disturbances. Partly as punishment for past offences, partly as insurance against future trouble, Louis clapped the demagogue into prison. Cardinal's hat and all, he was left to cool his heels behind stone walls until he could learn wisdom. Some years later, with the help of the Duke de Brissac, he escaped and wandered about Europe, a dissatisfied exile. During those years he wrote the piquant memoirs that give us such a vivid picture of his times.

Another Frondeur whose presence was dispensed with was Chateauneuf. Shortly after the return of the Court to Paris he was dismissed from office and sent to vegetate in his native province. It was his final exit from the political stage and the death blow to his ambitions. Always, in the past, Marie de Chevreuse had come to the rescue and had intrigued to restore him to power. This time she watched his dismissal with in-

difference. A blow had just fallen on her, beside which everything else faded into insignificance.

Of all the ring-leaders of the Fronde, Marie de Chevreuse alone had retained her power and prestige. She had emerged from the struggle, not only unscathed but with enhanced reputation. By her handling of Charles of Lorraine in June, she had done much to bring about the fall of Condé, and she had been deep in the royal councils during the last few months of the Fronde. On the return of the Court, she took her old place at the Queen's side and was treated with the same friendly intimacy as of yore. It was the reward of victory and a tribute to her political prowess.

From her exalted place beside the throne she could survey with amused complacence a battle-field from which her enemies had fled in disorder. The long duel with the House of Condé had resulted in a complete triumph. The Duke himself was in Spain, a discredited traitor. Madame de Longueville had retired into a convent. The old Dowager-Duchess was dead, and the clan, as a whole, demoralized and weakened. The insult to Charlotte had been well and truly avenged.

The Fronde, while a triumph for Marie de Chevreuse, had played havoc with her daughter's matrimonial prospects. Political rivalry had upset the match with the Prince de Conti and the battle of Porte St. Antoine had resulted in the death of another prospective husband. Marie was about to plunge for the third time into the matrimonial market when a tragedy occurred which was to write finis to all her schemes.

On November 7, Charlotte complained of feeling ill. That night she died in violent convulsions and a few hours later her body turned a livid black. All the evidence pointed to poison, but the guilty person was never discovered. It may have been some jealous rival, envious of the girl's radiant youth. The blow may have been aimed at Marie by some political opponent. Charlotte may even have taken the poison herself, either by accident or in a fit of depression. The mystery remains unsolved to this day.

The death of Charlotte, as sudden as it was tragic, was a blow from which Marie de Chevreuse never recovered. It killed all her vivid interest in intrigue, much of her *joie de vivre*. The two had been more like sisters than mother and daughter. Together they had shared the perils of the escape to England, the hardships of exile and the joy of return. Together they had engaged in the intrigues of the Fronde and laughed at its humorous incidents. For Charlotte's sake Marie had made the alliance with the Princes. To avenge her she had driven Condé from France. Now it all seemed futile and the fruits of victory turned to dust and ashes in her mouth.

Sunk in the depths of gloom, Marie heard of the imprisonment of de Retz, the banishment of Beaufort and the dismissal of Chateauneuf with utter indifference. Even the return of Mazarin early in February found her uninterested.

Strangely enough France shared her philosophical attitude, and accepted the return of the hated Minister without protest. When Louis returned to Paris,

he came as its King and quickly made his supremacy felt. There was about the slim dark-eyed boy a dignity that inspired respect, a calm assurance that compelled obedience. When he announced that he wished to recall Mazarin there was not a dissenting voice. The Cardinal came back from his exile, summoned by the same Parliament that had recently put a price on his tonsured head.

He hardly recognized the Paris to which he returned. He had left it a seething mass of sedition and conflict. He found it quiet and orderly, going meekly about its business and treating its King with submissive reverence. With the removal of the ring-leaders, there was no incitement to rebellion. France now contemplated with bewildered horror the results of its recent madness. Thousands of lives had been lost, millions of francs wasted, untold property destroyed, all to satisfy the selfish ambition of a few addle-pated nobles and politicians.

Back in Paris to stay, Mazarin gathered up the reins of government and settled down to a peaceful career of plunder. Henceforth he would guide the destinies of France with a single eye to his own profit, and avoid like a plague all such costly disturbances as the Fronde. To his relief he found that all his enemies had been scattered. Of all the Frondeurs, there remained only Madame de Chevreuse and she had, during the last year, been his ally. Her support had been of the utmost assistance to him, and he was anxious to retain her co-operation.

He found Marie saddened and subdued, still reeling under the crushing blow that had befallen

her. Politics had lost their interest and she longed for the peace of Dampierre. With the King's consent, she was about to withdraw from Court, when Mazarin asked her help in one last small matter.

His policy now was one of conciliation and he wished to win over all those who might still cherish some lurking grudge against the administration. Condé was stirring up trouble in the South, and it was essential that he should get no support from the nobles. The young Duke de Noirmoutiers was suspected of being sympathetic towards the exiled Duke, and Mazarin asked Marie to keep him from joining the lost cause.

Noirmoutiers had been one of Charlotte's most ardent admirers and a frequent visitor at the Hôtel de Chevreuse. Marie knew his weaknesses and played on them with her matchless skill. In a few interviews she won the young man's confidence, discussed his plans and dissuaded him from throwing in his lot with Condé. Completely won over by her arguments, Noirmoutiers fell into line and joined the ranks of the King's loyal servants.

With the winning of Noirmoutiers, Marie de Chevreuse brought her political career to a close. Like a wise actress, she retired from public life when she was at the zenith of her fame. The Fronde had proved her one of the ablest politicians of the age. She had regained the friendship of Anne, compelled the admiring respect of Mazarin and routed the hereditary enemies of her House. Greater triumphs, unlimited pres-

tige might have been hers, if she remained at Court, but she had lost all ambition.

Marie had never engaged in intrigue for its own sake. Always there had been a friend to help or an enemy to fight. Woman-like, she had been swayed by her emotions. Her actions had been dictated either by love or by hate. With the death of Charlotte, she fell into an apathetic state. Henceforth her interest in public affairs would be purely academic. Marie de Chevreuse would no longer make history.

Early in 1653, she retired to Dampierre and with her went Geoffrey de Laigue. The good Baron had gone lightly out to Liege five years before under orders to win her heart. He came back her captive and remained her contented slave for life. For twenty-two years they lived together at the Chateau in a relation that was a satisfying blend of passion and congenial companionship. It was generally believed that they had contracted what was known as a *mariage de conscience*.

From her peaceful retreat Marie continued to watch the endless struggle for power and place. and occasionally lent a hand to help a friend. When the Jansenists were being persecuted, she wrote to Mazarin to intercede for them. His reply is notable for its tone of submissive flattery: "I find myself in some difficulty: nevertheless, if you will not relieve me of the necessity of praying Their Majesties. . . . I will do it to obey you." Later, in another connection he writes: "I send you the permit you ask out of blind submission to the commands you have been pleased to lay upon me." Marie had retired from active life but she remained an influential personage, one whose favor was sought and whose word carried weight.

One by one, as the years passed, the actors who had played their parts in the tragi-comedy of Marie's life passed from the stage. The year after her retirement her father, the Duke de Montbazon, died at the age of eighty-six. For all his years the doughty old lad had lost none of his vivid interest in the opposite sex. Like David he combatted the chill of age with the help of a succession of fair Shunammites. Unlike David he showed no diminution in his natural powers and no loss of ambition. He left a merry widow, a young daughter, Anne de Rohan, and a mountain of debts.

For five years the Duchess de Montbazon consoled herself for his loss with a series of lovers. Then she too died and was duly embalmed. The lover of the moment entered the room to take a last fond farewell but the embalmers had not finished their work. He saw his dead mistress with her head off and was so aghast that he retired hastily into a monastery. In later years he founded the Trappist Order of Monks, whose members are vowed to perpetual silence.

In the same year Claude de Lorraine, Duke de Chevreuse, tottered from the stage which he had adorned for over eighty years. He had shared his father-in-law's amorous proclivities and had been equally tireless in his pursuit of love. To the very last he could be galvanized into action by a voluptuous figure and insisted on being tended during his illness by personable wenches.

He left his financial affairs in such hopeless confusion that he was accused of dying to escape his creditors. His only asset was the Duchy of Chevreuse. In order to pay his outstanding debts, Marie sold the title and estates to her own son, de Luynes. Some years later this son married Anne de Rohan, Marie's step-sister. Thus for the second time, a de Rohan married a de Luynes and became Duchess de Chevreuse.

The frenzied finance of Chevreuse and Montbazon had involved the family in a series of lawsuits, and these afforded an outlet for Marie's natural pugnacity. For the rest, her days were passed pleasantly in the company of her *cher ami,* de Laigue. The care of the estate provided her with some occupation, and she found genuine happiness in relieving the distress among her tenants. It was probably during this time that she wrote the "Discourse on the Art of Love" that has been mentioned by contemporaries. Unfortunately this literary effort has never come to light and was probably lost during the Revolution. The world is the poorer for its loss. It was a dissertation by one who admittedly knew her subject.

From time to time Marie would emerge from her peaceful retreat and appear at Court. There she would renew old friendships, watch the latest developments in the political field and pick up the newest scandal. We get a glimpse of her on one such expedition.

She was sitting with Anne and a few of her intimates, discussing the young King's infatuation for Louise de la Valliere. Louis himself entered the room

and chatted for a time with his mother and her ladies. He playfully accused them of talking scandal and declared that people are always ready to censure the sins to which they themselves are most addicted. "Here is Madame de Chevreuse, for example," he laughed. "She frowns now at love but we have heard that in her younger days she was not so strict."

Marie's hilarious youth and colorful maturity were, in fact, common property. She was regarded by the new generation at Court as one of the prize exhibits of a more romantic age, and her adventures had become legendary. When she was over seventy, a scandalous little book called *"La Carte Geographique"* was printed in Paris. Under the thin disguise of a geographical gazette, it listed the outstanding figures at court. Thus:

> CHEVREUSE: a large fortress, quite ruined. In the old days it was exceedingly famous and full of traffic, and did business in several countries. The citadel is now quite in ruins, thanks to many sieges and it is reported to have frequently surrendered at discretion. . . .
>
> "We have seen beauty by its own fire burnt
> Wither and fade."

The loveliness that had survived so many adventures and laughed at the calendar had succumbed at last to the relentless attack of the marching years. The lithe figure had become matronly, the exquisite face was

wrinkled; the eyes had lost their bright allure, but the ineffable charm remained. The rapier play of her wit still delighted her friends, and her infectious chuckle was as ready as ever. Her hair was whitening but her brain had all its old far-sighted keenness. Marie could still pull strings and make her puppets dance.

Her interests now centred around her son and his growing family. With their welfare at heart, she played one last little game and played it so deftly that it can only be deduced from a few known facts.

The financial affairs of France were at that time controlled by Nicholas Fouquet, who took advantage of his position to plunder the country on an epic scale. Millions of francs, diverted from the public treasury, had gone to swell his private fortune. Meanwhile, in the King's household a young man named Colbert was going about his master's business with efficiency and discretion. Among his other duties, he found discreet lodgings for the King's various casual mistresses, arranged for the baptism and adoption of their offspring and found for the children of Madame de Montespan the highly respectable governess who was later to rule France as Madame de Maintenon.

Anne, who was becoming ever stouter and more lethargic with the passing years, bestirred herself and went to Dampierre. Such a visit was a signal mark of royal favor and indicates that the friendship begun fifty years before had regained some of its old warmth. For a week the Queen-Mother was Marie's guest and, during that time, they had many long pri-

Marie de Rohan, Duchess de Chevreuse

Marie de Rohan, Duchess de Chevreuse

vate conversations. Lacking direct evidence, we can only assume their importance.

Shortly after Anne's return to Paris, Fouquet was dismissed and indicted for embezzlement. The discreet Colbert took his place and proved himself a wizard of finance. Later still, Colbert's daughter married the grandson of Marie de Chevreuse, Charles Honoré d'Albert, Duke de Luynes, Duke de Chevreuse and Duke de Chaulnes.

Such are the bare facts of Marie's last intrigue. They can be ignored or interpreted differently, but they are at least suggestive. Times were changing and shrewd observers realized that the day of the turbulent noble was over. Henceforth prestige would depend not on the strong arm but on the long purse. The family tree, however lofty, must be nourished with gold and planted in rich ground. As the feudal lord with his tenant army passed away, his place was taken by the wealthy bourgeois. The marriage of a Rohan to the son of a financier marked a new order of things and put that ancient family on a firmer financial footing.

Anne of Austria died in 1666, and four years later Marie lost yet another friend when the gallant Chevalier de Jars limped from the stage. Last of all de Laigue, the companion of so many years, went to join the noble company of lovers who awaited Marie in the shadows. He left her alone with her memories in a world suddenly cold and drab. He was laid to rest in the burial ground at Dampierre where, five years later, his mistress would come to lie beside him.

EPILOGUE

Marie de Chevreuse had lived too long. Gone were the riotous days when the lusty laughter of Henry of Navarre rang through the Louvre; when blood was hot and swords sprang from their scabbards at a word. Under the iron rule of Louis XIV, France had grown stereotyped. Etiquette had taken the place of the Ten Commandments, and decorum was the god whose altars filled the land. The Louvre stood dark and silent, haunted by the ghosts of its lurid past. Amid the rococo splendors of Versailles *le Roi Soleil* clicked pompously about on his high red heels, while the courtiers bowed to the ground in reverential awe. Madame de Maintenon ruled with the rigid virtue of the reformed prostitute, and in the crushing boredom of her presence laughter died unborn.

The present was grey and empty but the past was a gorgeous riot of memories. Marie stood alone on the darkening stage, while across the boards, in imagination, trooped the actors who had played their parts in the gay days of old. There was Henry of Navarre with a mistress on each arm and his casual offspring gambolling about, numerous past all counting; Chalais writhed on the scaffold and de Jars limped proudly to the torture chamber; Richelieu swept by, stately in his scarlet robes and behind him "the grey Cardinal"

shuffled along on sandalled feet; Marie de Medici stormed past, scowling with jealous rage and the Princess de Conti reeled in uncorsetted mirth; there Buckingham bowed with ineffable grace, while pearls dripped unnoticed from his satin doublet; Louis the Chaste, kicking and sobbing, was carried to his wife's bed; the "sweetest prince in Europe" turned aside to hide his squint and Chevreuse strolled about exhibiting his diamond scarf; black-browed Chateauneuf looked gloomily down from his prison window; Gaston slouched by, hands in pockets, his lips puckered in their eternal whistle; Louise de la Fayette passed demurely, breviary in hand; and across the stage slipped the furtive figure of Montagu, muffled to the eyes and carrying the fatal black bag.

Once again Marie heard the blood-hungry howl of the mob as they fell on the dead body of Concini, the shrilling of violins as the Bastille surrendered to the Fronde and the thunder of pursuing hooves on the road to Spain.

For five years the leading lady waited alone while the ghostly procession passed and repassed. Then came the cue for her exit. With perfect composure Marie spoke her last lines and departed into the darkness. The curtain fell and the play was over.

It had lasted for nearly eighty years and in that time Marie de Chevreuse had made history. Equipped only with a quick wit, a lovely face and an abiding sense of humor, she had kept the chancelleries of Europe in a turmoil and swayed the destiny of France.

Studying her career with an impartial eye, there seems nothing either profitable or constructive in her activities, but the glamor of her personality makes impartiality difficult to achieve.

How can one judge calmly a woman who combined the political acumen of a great statesman with the irresponsible destructiveness of a small ape; who had the morals of a street arab and the manners of a grande dame? She was urged on to do incalculable mischief by the kindliest heart in the world. When her impulsive generosity prompted her to a course of action, she threw scruples to the four winds of heaven. No danger could daunt her; no thought of self-interest came to check her headlong pace. She never failed a friend or yielded to an enemy. Gay and gallant, she played the game for all it was worth—won with a careless shrug and lost without whining.

It is difficult to think of that narrow grave at Dampierre as marking the utter extinction of her dynamic personality. It is even more difficult to picture her demurely playing a harp in the conventional heaven of the Sunday-school books. Perhaps, "a most individual and bewildering ghost," she haunts the scenes of her past triumphs. Perhaps in some place of shades, she loves and laughs, tossing

> ". . . her brown delightful head,
> Amusedly, among the ancient dead."

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIOGRAPHICAL
(The Duchess de Chevreuse)

Batiffol, Louis; *La Duchesse de Chevreuse.*

Cousin, Victor; *The Secret History of the French Court.*

Williams, H. Noel; *A Fair Conspirator.*

BIOGRAPHICAL
(General)

Barine, Arvède; *La Grande Mademoiselle.*

Belloc, Hilaire; *Richelieu.*

Cabanes, Docteur; *Le Cabinet Secret de l'Histoire.*

Cousin, Victor; *Madame de Longueville.*

Marie de Hautefort.

Dufour, T. L.; *Princesses, Dames et Aventurières du Regne de Louis XIV.*

Federn, Karl; *Richelieu.*

Godley, E.; *The Great Condé.*

Hartmann, C. H.; *The Magnificent Montmorenci.*

Hassall, Arthur; *Mazarin.*

Lodge, Richard; *Richelieu.*

Motteville, Madame de; *Memoirs.*

Rabutin, Marquis de Bussy; *Histoire Amoreuse des Gaules.*

Retz, Cardinal de; *Memoirs.*

Robert, Henri; *Les Grands Proces de l'Histoire.*

Rogers, Cameron; *Gallant Ladies.*

St. Amand, Imbert de; *Women of the Valois Court.*

Williams, H. Noel; *The Brood of False Lorraine.*

HISTORICAL

Bazin; *Histoire de France sous Louis XIII.*

Bingham; *The Bastille, Vol. I.*

Boulenger, Jacques; *Seventeenth Century in France.*

Guizot; *Histoire de France.*

Lord, A. P.; *Regency of Marie de Medici.*

Perkins; *France under Richelieu.*

France under Mazarin.

Voltaire; *Le Siècle de Louis XIV.*

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
0025980343

944.038 C4283

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

This book is due on the date indicated below, or at the expiration of a definite period after the date of borrowing, as provided by the library rules or by special arrangement with the Librarian in charge.

DATE BORROWED	DATE DUE	DATE BORROWED	DATE DUE

C28(946)M100

NOV 29 1946